

Power Structures and Patterns of Interaction in the Malaysian Army

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ABSTRACT

Study on power structures and their influences on the patterns of interaction used in the military is a rare phenomenon due to strong gatekeeping. Many past researchers have delved only into military culture and organisational communication. The aim of this paper is to present findings of this research gap i.e., on the patterns of interaction used by both commissioned officers and enlisted personnel in the Malaysian Army. It discusses how power structures influence the patterns of interaction used by them. The study investigates how rank structure and chain of command in the military (legitimised authority) influence both commissioned officers and enlisted personnel in deriving their patterns of interaction. It also investigates how the dominant ideology and organisational culture (hegemony) derive their patterns of interaction. This study analyses the transcripts of three audio recordings among commissioned officers and enlisted personnel which were audio recorded from a meet up, meeting and drill training session. The findings indicate that members of the Malaysian Army derive their patterns of interaction through different means. Those different means are not just through coercive means contrary to popular belief but also through regulatory and subtle means. Those different means are determined by the context and speakers. The findings reveal that command and control are essentially linked to many contributing factor and not just merely power per se.

Keywords: power; power structures; verbal interaction; coercion; Malaysian Army

INTRODUCTION

The notions of command, control, power and authority are all synonymous to the customs and traditions of the military. It is highly regarded as a well-trained organisation and ever ready in response to any acts of war or even in non-combat situations which require military intervention. However, most of the general population will have their own preconceived idea of the military from movies, dramas, books and news (Kantor, 2016). The military culture encompasses the values, norms, traditions and the set of beliefs that differentiates the military from other organisations (Lee, 2003). Due to the existing lack of understanding on the military culture, not many people who are civilians in the general population understand how and why members of the military behave in their own unique way (Redmond et al., 2015). The society at large will often have that preconditioned, surface level mentality of the military taking on the predominant form of power; institutionalised with a governed set of rules and conceptualised with a necessity of order (Hobbes, 1962). One will consider less on the concealed approach of power which is subdued, setting a certain set of beliefs or ideology within an organisation like the military through power by politics (Machiavelli, 1958) which is very much hegemonic in nature.

The organisational structure of the military can be clearly seen on the badges of rank for their members. Those rank insignias on all commissioned officers and enlisted personnel define the ever existing rank structure in the military. Luckwaldt (2017) explains that in the course of history, commissioned officers originated from noble aristocrats or landowners who receive commissions from a monarch. Those commissions granted them the rights to train

soldiers, in which the enlisted ones were made up of the commoners whom the commissioned officers led into battle. In today's modern military, the privileges of commissioned officers during those aristocratic eras are maintained in the level of authority granted to commissioned officers as the vested source of command in a military unit.

His Majesty the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* is the Supreme Commander of the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF, hereafter); bestowed with the rank of a Field Marshal (Reid, 1957). Any commissioned officer of the MAF is acting in the name of His Majesty to the unit and men under his command. Therefore, all commissioned officers of the MAF are bestowed with His Majesty's Royal Commission and their names are published in the Government's Gazette which embodies the officers' corps with a brotherhood of shared prestige and elite status (Armed Forces Act, 1972). With such prestigious authority, commissioned officers act as managers to enlisted personnel. The contrasting factor between commissioned officers and enlisted personnel lies in their level of authority in which commissioned officers embody in the prestige to lead, mirroring senior management roles in the corporate world (Luckwaldt, 2017). Enlisted personnel in the MAF comprise of the backbone and workforce of the services.

With the distinct hierarchical structure, the military has a very clear chain of command. Each member of the military will have to report to a specific individual who is in command; addressing issues and accepting orders. Therefore, there are very unique patterns of interaction among commissioned officers and enlisted personnel which revolve around power structures and hierarchy. Thus, the military as a community has its own peculiar way of depicting interaction which indicates its hierarchical structure and values (Azlina Abdul Aziz, 2017). In view of the above reasons, there is a need to address existing gaps of knowledge in understanding how the power structures; which are legitimately enforced and subtly practiced in the military influence the patterns of interaction used by its members. The objectives of this paper are to highlight the patterns of interaction used by commissioned officers and enlisted personnel in the military; with specific reference to the Malaysian Army and to address how the power structures influence the patterns of interaction used in the Malaysian Army. The patterns of interaction and the power structures unravelled the methods used by people in power and those subjected to power during their routine interactions which involved decision making, enforcement of obedience and influencing others.

LITERATURE REVIEW

PREVIOUS STUDIES ON POWER RELATIONS

It was also found that many past studies indicated that language used in organisations enacted power relationships through the maintenance of identities, fulfilment of needs and achievement of needs (Talbot, Atkinson & Atkinson, 2003; Suhaili, Ahmad & Aminah, 2015). However, we know very little about the differences in the patterns of interaction used by commissioned officers and enlisted personnel.

Those past studies which were conducted are namely; the factors influencing the success of the military's process improvement teams by Nuppenau (1993), change and continuity of military culture by Dunivin (1994), military perspectives of organisations and their effects on organisational culture by Winsor (1996). Some other studies on military cultures were conducted on the social and environmental influences on change in the military's organisational culture by Breslin (2000), need to change US Army culture by Ault (2003), trends in the US military culture by Watson (2006), defining the military culture as

specific form of institutional culture by Wilson (2008) and the transfer of military culture to private sector organisations by Tinoko and Arnaud (2013).

Apart from that, other past studies were conducted on the aspects of power which focused on other concepts such as the organisation structure and communication by Hage, Aiken and Marrett (1971), organisational communication by Goldhaber (1990) and Johansson (2007), a research conducted on the basis of power effects on method of communication with specific reference to project management by Tran (2007) and clarification of the loopholes between politeness and power by Althuwaimer and Alqahtani (2016). Nonetheless, those analyses did not represent the military as an institutionalised setting.

In the body of research, past studies were not focused on the power structures in the military and their influence towards the patterns of interaction on its members. Instead, they were conducted on the aspects military culture within the military and by military sociologists; therefore receiving minimal attention outside these disciplines of research despite its relevance beyond the military setting (Tinoko & Arnaud, 2013).

Subsequently, there were challenges in obtaining genuine data from informants in the military since many researchers are not in the military and that very hindrance often limited the drive of research in this area. A study like this will shed some light on how dominant groups in the higher echelon of the military derive their patterns of interaction used based on the power structures. Discourse analysts can also gain a better understanding in critical factors influencing communication within the military setting in contrast to what other researchers discovered in other civilian organisations which are less hierarchal and rank based like the military. The conceptions of power being practised and exercised in the military can be differentiated between Hobbes and Machiavelli's traditions of power (Clegg, 1989).

CONCEPTIONS OF POWER

The roots of power can be viewed through two different streams of conceptions which were proposed by Hobbes (1962) and Machiavelli (1958). There is a major difference between Hobbes and Machiavelli's conceptions of power in which the former conceptualised the concept of sovereignty and community whereas the latter defined power metaphorically with strategy and organisation. The continuity of the former was also expressed by Foucault (1981) that power is formulated based on sovereignty and power acts as the locus of will; in which other wills will bend. It can be said that the subjected ones towards power's sovereignty are not able to recognise their own wills as their own wills are being captured by the sovereign power of another individual (Clegg 1989). It is often viewed that Hobbes and his supporting theorists legislated and outlined the description of power and in contrast; Machiavelli and his supporting theorists interpreted the effects of power. Machiavelli contrasted Hobbes' work through the removal of the legislator's role and interpreted the strategies of power in organisations viewed through the lenses of politics which are ideologically driven through hegemony.

Institutionalised power is a form of legitimate power which is drawn from the position or rank of an individual within the social context and the rights of the individual to request and demand compliance from subordinates (Hobbes, 1962; Tran, 2007). This notion of legitimate power is formal in nature and is rightfully delegated to the holder of the position (Hughes, Ginnett & Curphy, 2006). Legitimation encompasses the process of justification and sanctioning an act or power on the basis of conforming to norms (Abduljalil, Noraini Ibrahim & Nor Fariza Mohd Nor, 2014). As in the context of the military, commissioned officers hold the institutionalised status. This contributes to the wielding of legitimate power

which is seen through the submission of enlisted personnel who are subordinates. Besides that, the institutionalised status of power in the military is also coercive in nature; as the institutionalised power holder has the legal rights to strictly monitor and punish those subordinates who do not conform to the requirements and norms set by the military (Hofmann et al., 2017). Tran (2007) proposed that the coercive nature of institutionalised power enforces obedience from subordinates; thus, legitimising and allowing commissioned officers to punish and withhold rewards.

Lukes (1974) placed forth that the ultimate exercise of power is to ensure that an individual or other individuals get things done based on one's will and secure their obedience through the control of their thoughts and desires. Besides institutionalised power, the roots of the power structure within the military are also associated with the abstract process of power wielding which is very much linked to hegemony. Gramsci (1971) clearly defined the theory of hegemony which is often termed as ideological dominance in which dominated groups accept a dominant ideology as a norm. Hence, hegemony at its greatest form of manipulation influences the way the subjected people under the hierarchical structure behave, talk, react or even limit their actions based on the set of norms being set by those who hold power and position. Those who hold power do not only centralise the levels of authority but also seek relationship with the subjected ones (Mohd Muzhafar Idrus & Nor Fariza Mohd Nor, 2016).

Gramsci proposed that a dominant class and a subordinate class exist in a social setting known as *alta cultura* (the culture of the ruling groups) and *cultura popolare* (the culture of the subaltern masses); universalising the ideology and practices of the ruling group (Merrington 1969). Fontana (1993) explained Machiavelli's thoughts that coercion is not enough for the attainment and maintenance of power. In the renown writing by Machiavelli (1958) entitled *The Prince*, he clearly stated his grounds in Chapter 18 in which he represented the balance of the two concepts of politics through force (*dominio*) and consent (*direzione*). He described that a prince (dominant class) must know how to utilise both force and consent and one without the other is not enough. Fontana extended Machiavelli's thoughts that coercive power which is being institutionalised cannot achieve an everlasting rule over the dominated ones but the dominant one needs to exercise intellectual and moral leadership with consent and persuasion; similar to Gramsci's hegemonic power.

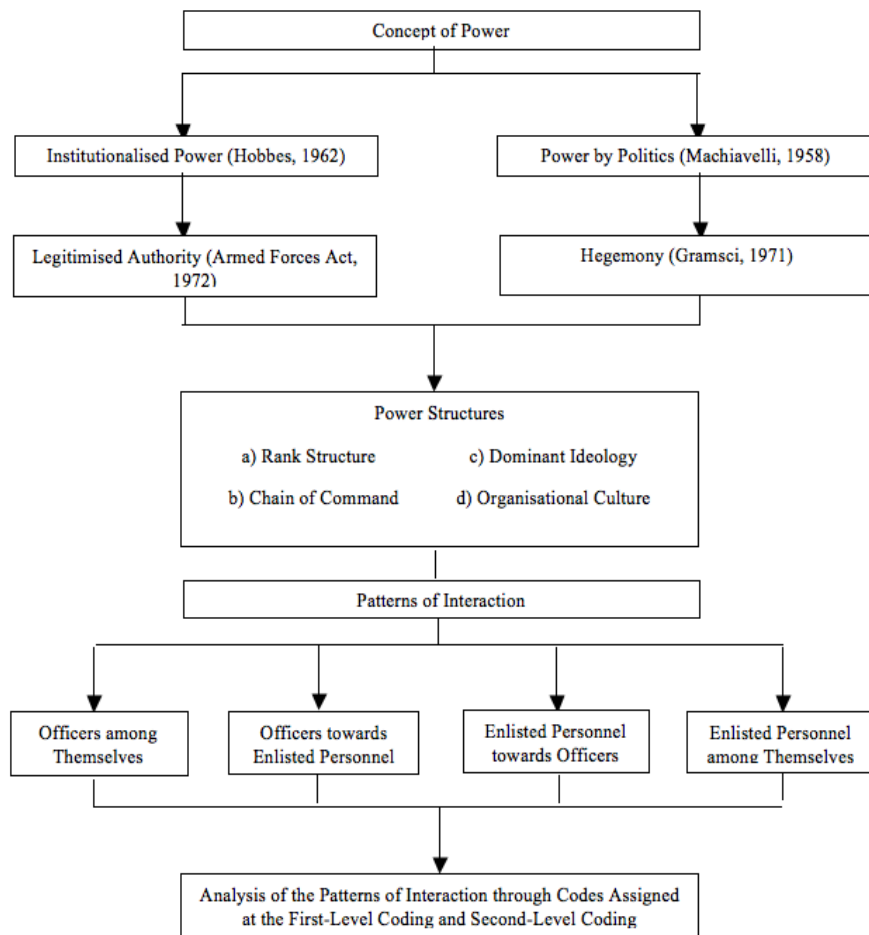
Machiavelli's conceptions of power reciprocate the relationship of a prince (dominant class) who needs the support and active consent of the people. If he fails to do so, the prince just becomes a mere feudal lord. Machiavelli and Gramsci's thoughts divide the society into two different spheres (two *civitas*); the first an aristocrat (dominant class) who possesses knowledge and the subjected ones (subordinate class) being the majority in the social class who cannot reach the level of the upper class due to the unavoidable subordination of the latter to a culturally dominant class (Fontana 1993). Similarly, the highly structured set of beliefs which are driven ideologically in the military has been viewed as unique as commissioned officers have a special responsibility for leadership.

ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION IN THE MILITARY

Goldhaber (1990) proposed that organisational communication is the life-blood of the organisation and research found that the value of organisational communication can be seen in effective communication which produces the high output in the organisation. Within the military itself, the perception of organisational communication is often viewed as conveying and receiving of information on the interdependent system of internal communication which includes downward, upward and horizontal communication, similar to other organisations (Redding & Sanborn, 1964; Zelko & Dance, 1965).

Hence, both the institutionalised status of authority and ideology driven in the military set the environment; for commissioned officers who are typically superiors over their subordinates to utilise downward communication as a measure of command, giving out orders and setting disciplinary guidelines to their subordinates. The reversed order for enlisted soldiers entails an upward communication process with reconfirmation on the orders given, providing feedback at their level of being subordinates to superiors. Lateral communication occurs at the same level of the rank structure with methods to solve problems, for coordination and unofficial matters. Hence, those contexts influence the communicative behaviour of members of the military and as communicants, they are vital in the process of information dissemination (Arina Anis Azlan & Samsudin A. Rahim, 2017).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Source: Adapted from Khoo (2019)

FIGURE 1. Conceptual Framework of Research

As illustrated in Figure 1, the research investigated how the power structures in the military influence the patterns of interaction used by its members which draw on the two conceptions of power known as institutionalised power (Hobbes, 1962) and power by politics (Machiavelli, 1958). The researcher conceptualised that the socially controlled environment in the military is formed by those who wield power. It is governed by certain legitimised authority (Armed Forces Act, 1972) through institutionalised power and also through the subtle yet abstract process of hegemonic power application (Gramsci, 1971).

METHODOLOGY

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

This qualitative research was conducted at one of the training centres which annually conducts career and functional courses for officers and enlisted personnel from the Malaysian Army. Besides that, one of the primary emic data was collected at an officers' mess which functions as a social setting for commissioned officers to dine and socialise. The primary emic data was collected from the interactions among commissioned officers and enlisted personnel through audio recordings. It consists of 3 different interactions which were recorded from different settings.

Chua (2016) proposed that voluntary participation is important for researchers to understand and the informants should not be forced to participate in a study. Therefore, this allows the informants to freely decide to participate or otherwise. The commissioned officers and enlisted personnel were briefed on the purpose of this study and were also assured on the confidentiality of this study. Hence, the researcher prepared letters of agreement for the informants and also guarantee forms for both parties to acknowledge. The researcher provided information about this study in the letters of agreement to his informants. The information about this research gave an overview of this research and allowed the informants to decide in participating or declining. They each signed a letter of agreement as an acknowledgement to become research informants. The researcher adhered to research ethics of guarding the privacy of the informants in this research by erasing the identity and names of the informants (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2000). Therefore, their names were kept anonymous and the researcher assigned the informants with their ranks and subsequently, the first alphabet of their names or a designation for their appointment in the military.

DATA COLLECTION

This research focuses on the power structures and how they influence the patterns of interaction found in the military which are used by its members with specific reference to commissioned officers and enlisted personnel in the Malaysian Army. In an organisation like the military, the power structures exist and permeate through the authority granted upon commissioned officers who are typically superiors over their subordinate enlisted personnel. Therefore, the power structures within the military exist through institutionalised power (Hobbes, 1962) and power by politics (Machiavelli, 1962) with the variation of ranks and level of hierarchy for its members.

The central question examined in this study focuses on analysing the patterns of interaction used by both commissioned officers and enlisted personnel. Besides that, the researcher sought for answers on how does the existing power structures in the military influence the patterns of interaction used by both groups of its members. With the notions of the distinct hierarchical structure, the researcher recorded three different interactions among commissioned officers and enlisted personnel from different settings. Through the power laden expressions used in those interactions, the audio recordings were then transcribed to identify obvious and subtle features linked to both institutionalised power and power by politics. The observation made by the researcher as a participant observer played a vital role in the triangulation of data.

The very first interaction was recorded during a meet up between a Senior Instructor (SI, hereafter) who is a Major by rank and a total of 69 course participants (CPs, hereafter) who consisted of enlisted personnel from the ranks of Warrant Officer Class 2, Staff Sergeant, Sergeant and Corporal. The duration of the recorded meet up was 6 minutes. The second interaction was recorded during a meeting which involved 113 commissioned officers

for the nomination of the officers' mess committee members. The meeting was chaired by the outgoing President of Mess Committee (PMC) who is a Lieutenant Colonel; initiated the nomination process for a new team of committee members. The duration of the recorded meeting was 25 minutes. The third interaction was recorded during a drill training session among enlisted personnel at a parade square. It involved 4 drill instructors and 70 CPs; undergoing their career course. The 4 drill instructors are Warrant Officer Class 2 by ranks; assigned to undertake the drill training session for the CPs who are Corporals by their ranks. The duration of the recorded drill training session was 54 minutes.

The audio data from the interactions were transcribed using Microsoft Word 2016 and minimal grammatical errors were corrected as the corrections did not alter the meaning of the information. The researcher used the transcription conventions which are based on the works of Schiffrin (1994) and Gail Jefferson presented in Wray, Trott & Bloomer (1998). Besides that, the audio data from 3 interactions spoken in the dominant Malay language with certain parts in English were transcribed in the both Malay and English to ease the process of gaining the very best from the interactions. Subsequently, the interaction transcripts were translated from the Malay language to English by a certified translator from the Malaysian Institute of Translation and Books (ITBM).

The first step of the data analysis involved the transcription of the audio recordings. The transcripts were then thematically analysed to identify the emerging features and the steps were divided into two different levels of coding. The first-level coding involved a sequenced process; identification of words, phrases, sentences in the transcripts which are driven by power, subsequently placing them into their respective categories (institutionalised power or power by politics) and assigning codes to those categories. The descriptors and coding scheme of the first-level coding are as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Descriptors and Coding Scheme of First-Level Coding (Khoo, 2019)

No	Forms of Power	Descriptors	Examples	Codes
1.	Institutionalised Power	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Used to make critical decisions, deliver a command, order or instruction. Used to get things done, enforce certain practices, enforce obedience, punish and ease the decision making process (Neustupny, 2002; Hoffmann et al, 2017). Used for the maintenance of the clear lines of authority and regulation of the chain of command. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> If you dishonour our agreement, I will revoke them. Can we agree? We are in the Army, we have our system, am I right? 	IP
2.	Power by Politics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Used to create the beliefs for the own usage of those who are in power. Used by those who are in power to influence subordinates based on the sphere of influence. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> But we as humans, we will always be forgetful. When I was a student, I would follow the rules as a student. 	PP

After the obvious and subtle features of power wielding were identified, the transcriptions of audio recordings were analysed through the communication network found in those interactions. Based on the transcriptions, the communication networks in those interactions which are linked to both institutionalised power and power by politics were identified. The communication networks include downward (superiors to subordinates), upward (subordinates to superiors) and horizontal communication (lateral level with same authority) (Redding & Sanborn, 1964; Zelko & Dance, 1965).

The second-level coding focused on the relationship between the emerging features. It involved a more extensive form of coding and was meant to analyse the underlying ideas shown in the transcripts. Based on the emerging features, the codes which were assigned from the first-level coding were grouped into two separate clusters for analysis. The first

cluster collectively explained the *raison d’etre* of the interaction involved as the military is a highly structured organisation which places its control through power exercised on its members and its members embracing strict hierarchies. The second cluster focused on the analysis of the implicit fundamentals in the data; evident only on thorough analysis. Through the conversations which took place, the researcher was able to understand how power is being applied, exercised and conveyed through a variety of means. The interactions were analysed based on words, orders and instructions which were coercive in nature. Apart from that, the researcher also identified utterances using the regulated form of institutionalised power with less coercion as both commissioned officers and enlisted personnel are well versed with the chain of command in the military. Lastly, the identification of power exercised in subtle manners was identified in the interactions among commissioned officers and enlisted personnel. The descriptors and coding scheme of the second-level coding are as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Descriptors and Coding Scheme of Second-Level Coding (Khoo, 2019)

No	Patterns of Interaction	Descriptors	Examples	Codes
1.	Coercive	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Used to make critical decisions, deliver a command, order or instruction. Used coercion or threats to convey intentions. Used to get things done, enforce certain practices, enforce obedience, punish and ease the decision making process (Neustupny, 2002; Hoffmann et al, 2017). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> If you dishonour our agreement, I will revoke them. Can we agree? Officially today, all of you, will be under my control, okay? 	C
2.	Regulated	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Used for the maintenance of the clear lines of authority and regulation of the chain of command. Used for the maintenance of the chain of command in the daily routines, norms and practices. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> We are in the Army, we have our system, am I right? So, once you are here, portray the best. Follow the seniority. 	R
3.	Subtle	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Used to create the beliefs for the own usage of those who are in power. Used by those who are in power to influence subordinates based on the sphere of influence. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> But we as humans, we will always be forgetful. When I was a student, I would follow the rules as a student. 	S

ANALYSIS OF STAGES IN THE PATTERNS OF INTERACTION

The researcher was able to isolate the emerging themes into three different stages namely; coercive, regulated and subtle. As the interactions were transcribed in addition to the second-level of coding, the researcher identified all the words and phrases uttered by commissioned officers and enlisted personnel which were power laden. The researcher placed both the coercive and regulated stages in the patterns of interaction based on the institutionalised power seen in the military. Subsequently, the researcher identified words and phrases which are regulatory in nature based on the military’s chain of command. At the third stage of the patterns of interaction, the researcher placed subtle, non-institutional words and phrases, looked into those emerging themes with the removal of the legislator and replaced the role of the legislator with the metaphorical form of power through strategy (Machiavelli 1958). Based on the stages in the patterns of interaction, the researcher was able to determine the findings from the primary emic data.

PEER DEBRIEFERS

A qualitative research like this required a neutral set of opinions and thoughts in order to review and solidify its methodology and findings. Researchers in the past have provided their

suggestions to utilise peer debriefing as a technique in order to refine the findings of a qualitative research (Creswell 1994; Creswell & Miller 2000). Therefore, the concept of peer debriefing is encouraged as a method to increase the credibility of a qualitative research (Barber & Walczak 2009).

Each and every qualitative research will vary with its different research designs and scopes. Therefore, guidance is deemed vital to improve credibility of a qualitative research (Spall 1998). The researcher's role in this study is very important in the methodology and analysis of findings from the primary set and secondary set of emic data as well as the etic data. Therefore, reflexivity is fundamental as the critical reflection of the knowledge constructed from the research which involved the planning, execution and writing of the research (Guillemin & Gillam 2004). Guillemin and Gillam extended their views that reflexivity allows the quality and validity of the research to be improved; leading towards a more rigorous research with the recognition of the limitations.

Hence, the researcher took the initiative to improve the trustworthiness and credibility of this study by seeking a valuable second opinion from Brigadier General Dr. A. Endry Nixon who is the Commandant of the Army Senior Officers' Institute. Spall (1998) expressed that the relationship between the researcher and peer debriefer should be based on trust, honesty and communication. In the case of this research, the peer debriefer himself provided constructive criticism on the problem statement of this study as a form of feedback to improve the writing process. The researcher sought after his insights pertaining to the research design, data collection and data analysis to provide a different perspective as well as a critique for the work of the researcher.

Apart from that, the researcher also obtained valuable feedback from Major General Dato' Tengku Ahmad Noor bin Tuan Chik, the General Officer Commanding of TRADOC who has served in the Malaysian Army for 40 years. The researcher bolstered his theories which were gained from the feedback and support from both the esteemed individuals in their fields of expertise.

FINDINGS

The discussions would be focusing on the patterns of interactions used by commissioned officers and enlisted personnel.

INSTITUTIONALISED POWER

The first interaction was focused on the SI who reminded the CPs of the rules of the training centre which have to be adhered. The SI also instilled the institutional setting of the military by reminding the CPs in a very firm manner.

- 74 SI: We will cooperate throughout this six weeks, give your cooperation to me
75 gentlemen. *Do not give me problems, if you give me problems, I will be*
76 *problematic. If I become problematic, wait. Okay, they know how I am when I am*
77 *problematic. Wohh, you are in trouble. Is that understood?* ^(IP-C)
78 CPs: *Understood Sir!* ^(IP-R)

Coercion was identified from Lines 74 to 78 in the transcript. The researcher was intrigued when the SI used absolute coercion as a warning to all CPs to cooperate with him throughout the six week's course duration. There were continuous warnings spoken off by the SI to the CPs such as, "*Do not give me problems, if you give me problems, I will be problematic. If I become problematic, wait. Okay, they know how I am when I am*

problematic. Wohh, you are in trouble.” Those were all the means taken by the SI as a legitimate way to enforce obedience. In the bedrock of institutionalised power, the SI drawn legitimate power based on his rank within the social context of the military. With that, he has the rights to request and demand compliance from the CPs who are his subordinates (Tran, 2007). Hence, members of the military are expected to show compliance and respect towards their superiors (Martins & Lopes, 2012).

The second interaction of the primary emic data involved members of the officers’ mess who are commissioned officers. The meeting was chaired by the outgoing PMC who is a Lieutenant Colonel. He initiated the process of nominating a new team of committee members. The General Officer Commanding (GOC, hereafter) who is a Major General intervened in the nomination process as the outgoing PMC could not ethically manage the nomination. Some of the identified features are as shown from Lines 32 to 43:

- 32 GOC: Ha? Am I right? *Let me talk on the reality gentlemen as a superior commander* ^(IP-C)
33 *because I want to make things right.* ^(C) If not, our selection is just a clown selection
34 but you do not know all the individuals. *Am I right?* ^(IP-R)
35 MBS: *That’s right.* ^(R)
36 GOC: *Am I right or wrong?* ^(R)
37 MBS: *That’s right.* ^(R)
38 GOC: *Therefore, I am using my authority which I possess as a Commander.* ^(C) Okay, uhm:
39 I know sometimes it goes against the constitution. That’s okay but what I mean is
40 that when *sometimes you go against what you’ve been taught to make things*
41 *right.* ^(C) If not, there were many times which I have seen this happening. Okay, first,
42 uhm: *my PMC is Dato’ P.* ^(R)
43 MBS: ((Members clapping))

The identified features concur that the hierarchy of the military displays its organisational status which is revealed through language. Individuals in the top echelon wield more power through their language (Morand, 2000). As indicated in the transcript, the GOC posed questions to the other members of the mess to illicit their responses; indirectly demanding their compliance after he reinforced his position as a superior commander. In many ways, the GOC regulated the chain of command in the military based on the rank system. The GOC stepped in as he felt that the members of the mess may start nominating members whom they do not actually know. Hence, as the superior commander; the GOC coercively overrode the norms of the nomination process and justified to the members of the mess. A commander like the GOC considered many other factors before coming to a decision and that decision is final once the order is issued (Halvorson, 2010).

- 322 AC: Is that okay if we have two names **Dato’?**
323 GOC: *That’s okay, b- but, but when we call for a meeting to seek for =* ^(IP-R)
324 AC: *= The individual is there.* ^(R)
325 GOC: *Uhm, he must be there. Understood? I don’t care.* ^(IP-C) (3.5) Okay.

Coercion was also identified from Lines 323 to 325 in the transcript. The researcher was once again intrigued when the GOC used absolute coercion to answer a question posed by the Acting Commandant of a training centre on the nomination of a committee member who holds two appointments. Strong phrases such as, *“he must be there. Understood? I don’t care”* were used by the GOC as a legitimate way to demand compliance. Based on his institutionalised status of authority, the GOC has the rights to request and demand compliance from the nominated mess committee member who is his subordinate officer (Tran, 2007). Hence, it is generally agreed that military culture restricts its members’ freedom of action and their rights are considered secondary to the needs of the military and the nation (Janowitz, 1959).

The third interaction of the primary emic data involved drill instructors who are facilitating a drill training session among enlisted personnel. Some of the identified features are as shown from Lines 19 to 21:

- 19 CP 2: Immediately on the command, three ranks in front of me, three ranks move.
20 DI 1: *Woi what is wrong with you Corporal? Your words of command are wrong!* ^(IP-C)
21 CP 2: Squad, pay attention this way.

The researcher identified coercion which was used by Drill Instructor 1 (DI 1) when Course Participant 2 (CP 2) called out the wrong words of command. CP 2 was drilling his own squad mates in his syndicate. He failed to properly deliver his drill command which resulted in him being verbally criticised in a stern manner by DI 1. DI 1 applied coercion to ensure that CP 2 can properly deliver his words of command. Hence, discipline was instilled on the parade square. Although DI 1 is a Warrant Officer Class 2 by rank and not a commissioned officer, DI 1 holds a higher rank and appointment as compared to CP 2 who is a Corporal by rank. As the researcher mentioned earlier, strict rank hierarchies are embraced by members of the military. The military is known as a highly structured organisation which places its control through power exercised on its members (Janowitz, 1959; Collins, 1998).

POWER BY POLITICS

Based on the first interaction, the researcher also identified words, phrases and sentences which are driven by power by politics from Lines 29 to 33. Ten of the CPs initially requested for the SI's permission to stay at their homes due to the close vicinity of their homes to the camp. Then, the SI granted his permission with a strict reminder for them to be involved in all the daily scheduled activities. He also coercively affirmed that he will not hesitate to revoke the privilege granted if any of the ten CPs dishonours that agreement.

- 29 SI: example from the disciplinary aspect, punctuality of time. *There are ten of you*
30 *who requested for my permission to stay outside the camp as your houses are*
31 *nearby am I correct?* ^(PP-S)
32 CPs: Yes Sir!
33 SI: *I grant permission for those involved to stay outside but with requirements, all* ^(S)

Despite being firm, the SI expressed to the CPs that he is considerate towards their welfare matters. Although he is in the position of the institutionalised power holder, the SI knew that coercion is not enough to attain and maintain his authority. Machiavelli (1950) explained that the balance of force and consent is essential for the dominant class to achieve an everlasting rule. Hence, the SI exercised intellectual and moral leadership with consent and persuasion. The SI could have used his authority to restrain the CPs to stay in the camp but instead, he consented to their request and allowed them to stay at their homes.

The researcher also identified words, phrases and sentences which are driven by power by politics from Lines 53 to 64. The GOC was being open and asked all the senior officers involved to discuss among themselves instead of voting for the new mess committee members.

- 53 GOC: *Discuss among yourselves.* ^(PP-S) No need for us to vote because, *it will come back to*
54 *both senior officers will have to discuss now to the extent gentlemen.* ^(S) Because
55 *you don't know because we are here at our level as seniors we already know.* ^(S)
56 *Because Major SR can't.* ^(S) Pity her, ^(S) looking into audit **lah**, many more **lah**. ^(S) I think
57 *it's fair for us to change.* ^(S) But uhm: we want to pass on to XXX and others. So, that
58 one also, I do not want to vote. I do not. I want both commanders to discuss
59 **Dato?** =

- 60 DM: = Yes **Dato'**.
61 GOC: *Your mess is my mess, my mess is your mess my friend.* ^(S) Haaa, that's it. *All of*
62 *you will be here longer, next year I will retire already.* ^(S) That's it. Uhm: So, uhm:
63 we have chosen. Secretary, I want Major SH.
64 MBS: ((Members clapping))

As the GOC, he could continue the traditions of members from the floor nominating the new mess committee members. However, he exercised intellectual and moral leadership based on consent and persuasion. The GOC even displayed compassion when he personally asked for another commissioned officer from XXX (a training centre) to replace Major SR as the treasurer. The researcher concurs that commissioned officers like the GOC have special responsibility for leadership; to lawfully take moral responsibilities as his duty (Defence Council, 1996).

Lukes (1974) affirmed that the ultimate exercise of power is to ensure that other individuals get things done based on one's will. Their obedience is secured through the control of their thoughts and desires; subjecting people to power without them knowing. Good communication with the other commissioned officers was the key in the case of the GOC permeating his philosophy of leadership and influencing his fellow officers (Hashem, 2017). The findings from the data indicated that the GOC was open and courteous to other commissioned officers. He declared that the mess is shared by all as one officers' corps; despite all commissioned officers are being accorded with that privilege. It can be said that the GOC used the combination of leadership and strategy of power as a form of influencing his fellow officers.

The researcher also identified words, phrases and sentences which are driven by power by politics from Lines 196 to 202 (Lines 193 to 198 for the original transcript) and from Lines 217 to 219 (Lines 211 to 213 for the original transcript). The newly appointed PMC nominated Lieutenant Colonel O (KO) as the Meals Committee Member of the Sunset Officers' Mess. The latter strategically attempted to evade the given task by reasoning with all the members of the mess.

- 196 KO: ***Dato'** can I share something **Dato'?*** ^(PP-S)
197 PMC: Huh?
198 KO: Because why, *like those meal committee members, because if we look at the*
199 *concept of uhm meals.* ^(S) *There are uhm meal committee members for XXX*
200 *and meal committee members uhm uhm there is **BAKAT*** ^(S) *((Armed Forces*
201 *Welfare and Charity Association)) there is XXX there is Pot Caring.* ^(S) *Why not*
202 *we divide for the Mess and we divide for XXX, easier right?* ^(S)
217 KO: *If tomorrow there is a massive activity:: for instance:: what if **Datin** visits, phase*
218 *two or Annex.* ^(S) *So, I can see all of them do not bother.* ^(S) *Therefore, two activities*
219 *run concurrently.* ^(S)

KO tried to explain that he has to look into food and beverages as he is the Meals Committee Member for XXX, Meals Committee Member for the Armed Forces Welfare and Charity Association and Pot Caring. He even suggested to divide the task for both the Officers' Mess and XXX and reasoned with the members of the mess with other possible concurrent activities. The other members were puzzled as they doubted KO. They were astonished and questioned over the avoidance of the assigned role to KO. As commissioned officers are accorded with the shared prestige and elite status in the officers' corps, KO strategically interacted with the GOC, PMC and members of the mess. The researcher identified that as the horizontal communication network. Due to the lateral nature of communication among commissioned officers, especially interactions which revolve around problem solving, KO reasoned with all the members of the mess to evade the task given (Redding & Sandborn, 1964).

Besides that, the researcher has also identified words, phrases and sentences which are driven by power by politics from Lines 220 to 226 (Lines 214 to 219 for the original transcript) which blend in well with institutionalised power. The GOC strategically solved the issue by explaining to KO that he would be able to suggest on the management of food due to his field of expertise being a Royal Service Corps (SC) officer. The GOC explained that Malay Regiment personnel are not able to do so due to their different field of expertise and he used the phrase, “We honour *la* the individual, that’s it.” This concurred with the ultimate exercise of power as KO’s obedience was secured through the control of his thoughts and desires (Lukes, 1974).

220 GOC: Haa:: Okay, okay okay. *Or else, you only suggest when there are activities which*
221 *are conducted externally from the mess.* ^(PP-S) *Nobody to tell you are SC ((Service*
222 *Corps)).* ^(IP-R) *For that matter the Malay Regiment personnel are not specialised and*
223 *that is not appropriate.* ^(S) *Then, the subject matter expert is already there.* ^(R) *Uhm: We*
224 *honour **la** the individual,* ^(S) *that’s it. Because SC is meant for food management.* ^(S)
225 *Who is from SC? You uhm tag along with that.* ^(R) *Don’t worry, your Chairman is*
226 *here =* ^(R)

However, the GOC also blended in institutionalised power along the process by uttering phrases such as, “Nobody to tell you are SC (Royal Service Corps)”, “Then, the subject matter expert is already here”, “Who is from SC? You uhm tag along with that. Don’t worry, your Chairman is here =”. The researcher concludes that even though the GOC strategically used influence through power by politics, he came to his decision based on the legitimacy of the chain of command. The GOC wanted to ensure that he maintained the clear lines of authority besides eliminating any confusion in the process of decision making (Halvorson, 2010).

COMMUNICATION NETWORKS

The researcher analysed the first interaction based on the communication networks. It was focused on the SI who reminded the course participants of the rules of the training centre which have to be adhered to. The SI was instilling the institutional setting of the military by reminding the course participants in a very firm manner. At the same time, the SI exercised intellectual and moral leadership with consent and persuasion (Machiavelli, 1950).

The patterns of interaction depicted in the first interaction were seen as the creation and exchange of messages. They are influenced by the nature of the military and role relationship based on rank (Goldhaber, 1990). Based on the existing chain of command in the military, the institutionalised power which lies in the authority granted upon the SI enabled him to make critical decisions and convey his intentions to his enlisted personnel through downward communication. Enlisted personnel employed the upward communication pattern which revolves around feedback based on the intentions by the SI.

Subsequently, the researcher analysed the second interaction based on the communication networks. The second interaction of the primary data emic data involved members of an officers’ mess who are commissioned officers. The meeting was meant to initiate the process of nominating a new team of committee members. The GOC who is a Major General intervened in the nomination process as the outgoing PMC could not ethically manage the nomination and delayed the process.

The GOC being the most senior commissioned officer holds the institutionalised status as the superior commander. Hence, he is vested with the rights to request and demand compliance from commissioned officers who are his subordinates (Tran, 2007). By virtue of the status and prestige of the officers’ corps, the GOC knew that after exercising institutionalised power, he has to strike the balance right between force and consent. The

GOC being the dominant one exercised intellectual and moral leadership with consent and persuasion. This is based on the position of the GOC who needs the support and active consent of his fellow officers; in which failing to do so, he becomes a mere feudal lord (Machiavelli, 1958).

The chain of command in the military affirms the authority granted upon the GOC which enables him to make critical decisions and convey his intentions to his fellow officers through downward communication. Commissioned officers who are subordinate to any of those who are superior to them employ the upward communication pattern which revolves around feedback based on the intentions by those who are more superior.

The researcher also identified the use of power by politics by KO when he was nominated as the Meals Committee Member of the Sunset Officers' Mess. KO strategically attempted to evade the given task by reasoning with all the members of the mess and tried to influence the GOC, PMC and members of the mess when he interacted with them. Based on the findings, the researcher ascertained that KO employed the horizontal communication network due to the lateral nature of communication among commissioned officers. This was especially seen in interactions which revolve around problem solving in which KO reasoned with all the members of the mess to evade the given task (Redding & Sandborn, 1964).

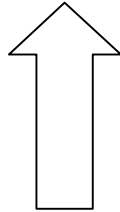
As shown in the third interaction, the researcher subsequently analysed the third interaction based on the communication networks. The third interaction of the primary emic data involved 4 drill instructors who facilitated the drill training session. They moved around to pass comments, make corrections and grant permission for the 70 course participants who are enlisted personnel to proceed with their next moves after completing each move correctly.

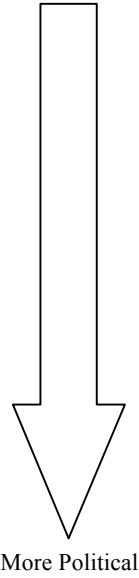
As superiors in that context, the drill instructors are vested with institutionalised power over their subordinates due to the rank, position, status and responsibility as drill instructors which was delegated to them (Tran, 2007). As the institutionalised power holders, the drill instructors have the legal rights in pointing out mistakes made by course participants who are their subordinates; thus enforcing obedience as well. Enlisted personnel who are senior by rank or in the authorised position will have the ability to request and demand compliance from their own subordinates (Tran, 2007). The findings were all aligned towards the chain of command in the military which is the hierarchical execution of command through the superiors and subordinates' relationship through both downward and upward communication networks.

As how other organisations operate on a daily basis, the military's organisational communication is contextualised into the field of decision making process with the aspects of downward, upward and horizontal communication (Voos, 1967). Those patterns of interaction in the military are derived from the creation and exchange of messages among members of the military. It is influenced by role relationship (rank); direction of the message, serial of the message and the content of the message itself as well as its own environment (Goldhaber, 1990).

INFLUENCE OF EXISTING POWER STRUCTURES ON THE PATTERNS OF INTERACTION

TABLE 3. Stages in the Patterns of Interaction (Khoo, 2019)

No	<i>Raison d'être</i>	Patterns of Interaction	More Institutional
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taking charge. - Maintenance of institutional status as commissioned officers. - Demand compliance. - Reinforcement of authority. - Enforce obedience. - Deter subordinates from giving problems to superiors. - Subject subordinates to the superior's decision. 	Coercive	

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preserve institutional authority. - Draw clear lines of authority. - Making a final decision. - Intolerance for insubordination. - Instilling discipline. 	Coercive	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regulating the routines and institution of the military. - Compliance of needs based on the chain of command. - Reinstate the chain of command based on the rank system. - Uphold rank seniority based on hierarchy. - Enforcing order. - Acknowledgement of institutional status. - Instil command. - Govern the set of rules in the military. - Necessity of order. 	Regulated	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subtle influence to secure obedience. - Securing the thoughts of subordinates. - Strategy to convince on agreeing to a decision made. - Win the hearts and minds of subordinates. - Balanced approach after initial reinforcement of authority. - Influencing superiors and equals when horizontal communication occurs. 	Subtle	

As shown in Table 3, the stages in the patterns of interaction were governed by the *raison d'être* of the interaction. Those interactions were all governed by the speakers and their respective contexts. Nevertheless, the justification for coercive, regulated and subtle forms of power applied in the three interactions are summarised in the below table. At the same time, the flow from being more legitimate to more hegemonic is shown based on the direction of the arrow is pointing. The legislation of power *per se* in the military is exercised based on chain of command. Institutionalised power was applied coercively to ease the critical decision making process, deliver a command or order or instruction, enforce obedience, punish and to get things done (Neustupny, 2002; Hoffmann et al, 2017).

Those who hold power also use the regulated form of institutionalised power with less coercion as all members of the military are well versed with the chain of command in the military. The findings indicated that some words and phrases are not coercive but legitimate as they are delivered based on the institutionally bound military routines. Apart from that, subtle patterns of interaction are also shown when the legislator's role in the military is removed and replaced by the metaphorical form of power through strategy (Machiavelli, 1958). Those strategies are forms of ideological dominance imparted on the dominated group as a norm or a state of mind (Gramsci, 1971). The balance of power between institutionalised power and power by politics set the ideology of the military's social order and values as norms; institutionalised by the legitimate authority seen in the military.

DISCUSSION

The findings portraying the patterns of interaction challenged the traditional perception of the military as a very autocratic organisation which only employs institutionalised power. Coercive, regulatory and subtle means of power were employed for various reasons based on the aforesaid factors.

The representations of institutional setting in the military and its speakers portray the methods used by individuals in power in using language. Based on the existing chain of command in the military, the institutionalised power which lies in the authority granted upon commissioned officers enable them to make critical decisions and convey their intentions to their enlisted personnel through downward communication. Enlisted personnel employ the

upward communication pattern which revolves around feedback based on the intentions by their commissioned officers.

Moreover, the chain of command in the military affirms the authority granted upon superior commanders which enable them to make critical decisions and convey their intentions to their fellow officers through downward communication. Commissioned officers who are subordinate to any of those who are superior to them employ the upward communication pattern which revolves around feedback based on the intentions by those who are more superior. Besides that, the researcher ascertained that commissioned officers employ the horizontal communication network due to the lateral nature of communication among commissioned officers. This was especially seen in interactions which revolve around problem solving in which KO reasoned with all the members of the mess to evade the given task (Redding & Sandborn, 1964).

As superiors in that context, the drill instructors are vested with institutionalised power over their subordinates due to the rank, position, status and responsibility as drill instructors which was delegated to them (Tran, 2007). As the institutionalised power holders, the drill instructors have the legal rights in pointing out mistakes made by course participants who are their subordinates; thus enforcing obedience as well. Enlisted personnel who are senior by rank or in the authorised position will have the ability to request and demand compliance from their own subordinates (Tran, 2007). The findings were all aligned towards the chain of command in the military which is the hierarchical execution of command through the superiors and subordinates' relationship through both downward and upward communication networks.

The findings which portrayed the patterns of interaction have challenged the traditional perception of the military as a very autocratic organisation which only employs institutionalised power. Commissioned officers like the SI employed institutionalised power through coercive means when he took charge, maintained his status as a commissioned officer, demonstrated his authority as the SI and demanded compliance from his CPs who are enlisted personnel. Coercion was used as a form of reinforcement for his authority and employed to enforce the CPs' obedience. The GOC only used coercion when he intended to reinforce his position as the superior commander and maintain his institutional status amongst all the commissioned officers. The flaws in the nomination process for the new mess committee members paved the way for the GOC to override the norms of the process and other commissioned officers were subjected to his decision. Coercion was also used by the GOC to draw the clear lines of authority with KO, thus making his final decision and indicated his intolerance for insubordination. Apart from that, coercion was also used by enlisted personnel who are drill instructors to instil discipline on the parade square and demand compliance from their CPs who are also enlisted personnel.

The regulatory form of institutionalised power is being regulated as a form of regulating the routines and institution of the military on a daily basis. The CPs complied with the SI's needs based on the social context; hence the CPs acknowledged the status of the SI as a commissioned officer. The chain of command was also reinstated by the SI when he upheld the rank seniority based on hierarchy and regulated the regimental system on a daily basis; hence enforcing order. The GOC indirectly demanded compliance from the other members of the mess by posing questions. The members of the mess then acknowledged his institutional status, authority and complied with his intent based on his position in the social context; which regulated the chain of command based on the rank system. It can be said that institutionalised power governs the set of rules in the military and permeates the necessity of order (Hobbes, 1962).

Besides institutionalised power, power by politics was employed by the SI through subtle means in order to secure the obedience of the CPs unknowingly. The CPs thoughts

were secured when subtleness was employed by the SI as a considerate individual towards the CPs' welfare in his communicative strategies. On the other hand, the GOC used power by politics to subtly influence the members of the mess and secure their obedience after employing institutionalised power. Based on the analysis made, the GOC used power by politics as a strategy to convince the members of the mess on agreeing to his decision to override the norms of the nomination process and allowing the rest of the appointments to be nominated by the other senior commissioned officers as well as winning their hearts by demonstrating compassion. The balanced approach by the GOC is seen as a strategy taken in influencing his fellow officers after he reinforced his authority.

Apart from that, the analysis also indicated that the lateral nature of communication allowed KO to employ power by politics when he interacted with the GOC, President of Mess Committee (PMC) and members of the mess. The researcher concurs that KO took the advantage of the horizontal communication network to influence the members of the mess, although some of them are his superior officers.

Based on the analysis made, the patterns of interaction in the military are derived through various means and those are all governed by the context as well as the speakers of the interaction. Through movies, dramas, books and news, the society in general may have their views on how members of the military apply institutionalised power when they interact with one another (Janowitz, 1959; Collins, 1998). Ironically, those perceptions are viewed from one angle and the reality is far more complex as those patterns of interaction are dependent on many other influential factors apart from the chain of command in the military.

CONCLUSION

This study shown how the existing power structures in the military influence the patterns of interaction used by its members. The methodology employed in this study is proven to be effective as it addressed how dominant groups in the higher echelon of the military derive their patterns of interaction through other ways besides the rank structure. The findings indicated that members of the military; both commissioned officers and enlisted personnel derive their patterns of interaction based which are coercive, regulated and subtle. Those are all based on the context; the situation and setting of those interactions as well as the speakers involved; commissioned officers or enlisted personnel or both in the same interaction.

There are possibilities of extending study like this to investigate conversations as an institution with its own specific practices, speakers and their identities as well as analysing the organisational practices with their constraints and context. When analysing conversations in organisations with hierarchy, emphasis can be placed into analysing other military service or uniformed services on their application of power in interactions involving both commissioned officers and enlisted personnel. However, an extension of this study could be considered to investigate the social conditioning of enlisted personnel with local cultural values which creates the gap and segregation between commissioned officers and enlisted personnel. It would be beneficial for the MAF at large and all the three branches of its military service to investigate the extent of local cultural values permeating in the different services and the impacts.

An area of study like this would be beneficial for the Malaysian Army. Researchers can look into the social conditioning of local cultural values among enlisted personnel which impedes the positive bonding among both commissioned officers and enlisted personnel and leads to segregation between the two different categories of members of the military. A different view could also be taken by researchers to investigate the same occurrence in the

other military services namely; the Royal Malaysian Navy and Royal Malaysian Air Force to study the extent of local cultural values permeating in the respective military services.

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