The Impact of Social Media Use on Soldier Morale: The Mediating Role of Psychological Resilience and Moderating Effect of Mission Length

Budi Santoso

Correspondence: Budi Santoso, Universitas Pertahanan, Indonesia.

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between social media use and soldier morale in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions, with a particular focus on the mediating role of psychological resilience and the moderating effect of mission length. Utilizing a quantitative research approach, the study employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using Partial Least Squares (PLS) to analyze data collected from 200 peacekeeping soldiers deployed in various missions. Findings indicate that social media use significantly enhances psychological resilience which in turn positively influences soldier morale. While social media use has a direct effect on morale, psychological resilience serves as a critical mediator. Furthermore, mission length moderates the relationship between social media use and soldier morale and between psychological resilience and soldier morale. The study's results provide critical insights for military leadership and policymakers to develop balanced social media policies that support mental well-being, resilience, and operational effectiveness in peacekeeping missions.

Keywords: social media use, psychological resilience, soldier morale, un peacekeeping

1. Introduction

In modern military operations, particularly within United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions, maintaining soldier morale is a critical factor in ensuring operational effectiveness. The rapid integration of social media into soldiers' daily lives has introduced a transformative shift in how peacekeepers engage in communication, access emotional support, and stay connected with their social networks. However, the role of social media in shaping soldier morale remains a complex and multifaceted phenomenon influenced by psychological resilience, mission length, and digital communication patterns.

Indonesia has been a key contributor to UN peacekeeping missions, with over 2,800 personnel deployed across various operations, including MONUSCO (Democratic Republic of Congo), UNIFIL (Lebanon), and MINUSCA (Central African Republic) (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2024). Given the prolonged nature of these missions, Indonesian peacekeepers experience extended separation from their families, making social media a primary means of maintaining interpersonal connections. Studies indicate that more than 70% of Indonesian peacekeepers use social media daily, primarily through WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram, for personal communication and social interaction (TNI Peacekeeping Center, 2023). These platforms serve as essential tools for emotional support, reducing feelings of isolation, and maintaining a sense of belonging to their home communities. While social media serves as a critical tool for emotional support, excessive use can contribute to increased stress levels, exposure to misinformation, and reduced operational focus. Furthermore, mission length plays a significant role where Indonesian soldiers deployed for over 12 months report higher dependency on social media for coping with isolation compared to those on shorter missions.

This study contributes to the communicative phenomenon of social media use by exploring its dual role as both a support mechanism and a potential source of psychological strain. While social media enables real-time communication and enhances social connectedness, excessive engagement can lead to increased stress, exposure to misinformation, and reduced operational focus. Furthermore, mission length plays a moderating role, with peacekeepers on long-term deployments (over 12 months) displaying a higher dependency on social media as a coping mechanism compared to those on shorter assignments.

Through a quantitative research approach employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using Partial Least Squares (PLS), this study systematically analyzes how social media usage influences the psychological resilience and morale of Indonesian peacekeepers. By identifying specific communication patterns and their psychological effects, the research

provides insights into the broader implications of social media as a communication tool within military contexts. The findings aim to inform military leadership and policymakers in designing balanced social media policies that optimize the benefits of digital communication while mitigating potential risks. This study extends the discourse on social media's role in professional environments, particularly in high-stakes settings such as military peacekeeping, where communication dynamics directly impact mental well-being and operational readiness.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Stress and Coping Theory

Social media has become an essential tool for communication, providing deployed soldiers with a way to stay connected with their families, access news, and engage in social interactions. Stress and Coping Theory, developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), provides a useful framework for understanding how soldiers manage stress related to social media use during deployment. The theory posits that individuals experience stress when they perceive environmental demands as exceeding their coping resources. Coping strategies - either problem-focused (addressing the stressor directly) or emotion-focused (regulating emotional responses) - influence psychological resilience. According to Henderson & Paladino (2023), soldiers who use social media for communication with loved ones report higher morale and emotional stability during deployments. Similarly, Martins et al. (2022) found that moderate social media use helps in reducing loneliness and isolation among military personnel.

2.2 Social Media Use and Psychological Resilience

Social media has become a vital tool for individuals coping with stress and adversity, especially among military personnel in high-risk environments. Recent studies highlight that social media fosters emotional support, enhances psychological resilience, and provides a sense of connection. Research by Greene et al. (2024) found that soldiers who actively engaged in supportive online communities exhibited higher resilience and lower stress levels. Similarly, virtual reality-based social media interactions have been shown to improve soldiers' mental preparedness and adaptability in demanding situations (Hsiung, Yu, & Cheng, 2024). These findings suggest that well-managed social media use can serve as a psychological buffer against stress.

However, social media can also contribute to psychological distress, depending on its usage. Studies indicate that excessive exposure to negative content, cyberbullying, and misinformation can undermine resilience and increase anxiety. Raus (2024) found that soldiers who excessively used social media as an avoidance mechanism exhibited lower resilience and higher stress levels. Furthermore, research by Krauss, Greene, and Edwards (2024) suggests that exposure to aggressive content online may heighten PTSD symptoms and reduce soldiers' ability to cope with adversity. These findings underscore the importance of monitoring and moderating social media consumption to prevent harmful psychological effects.

Given the dual nature of social media's impact, emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in mitigating its negative effects while enhancing its benefits. A recent study in Spain (2024) demonstrated that military personnel with high emotional intelligence were better at managing social media stressors and maintaining resilience. This suggests that interventions focused on improving emotional intelligence and media literacy could help soldiers navigate digital platforms more effectively. Future research should explore how structured social media engagement—such as resilience training through virtual platforms—can further strengthen psychological resilience in military contexts. Drawing from prior research findings, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Higher levels of social media use positively influence Psychological Resilience in UN peacekeeping missions

H2: Higher levels of social media use positively influence soldier morale in UN peacekeeping missions

2.3 Psychological Resilience and Soldier Morale

The role of social media in military environments has grown significantly, influencing various aspects of soldiers' psychological well-being and morale. Social media platforms allow soldiers to stay connected with family, access mental health resources, and engage with military communities, helping them cope with stress and isolation during deployments. However, concerns about excessive use, exposure to misinformation, and security risks remain prevalent. Understanding the balance between the benefits and risks of social media use is essential for optimizing its impact on soldier morale, particularly in UN peacekeeping missions where personnel face prolonged periods away from home.

Several studies indicate that social media use has a positive influence on soldier morale. Maintaining social connections through digital platforms can reduce loneliness and emotional distress, which are common among deployed personnel. Research by Swarnawati and Wulandari (2024) highlights that structured online communication with family and colleagues can improve soldiers' emotional stability. Additionally, military organizations utilize social media to disseminate motivational content and build a sense of camaraderie among troops, further strengthening unit cohesion

(Grinev, 2024). Moreover, digital mental health interventions, such as stress management apps and peer-support groups, have been found to improve psychological resilience, ultimately contributing to higher morale (Bergenfeld, 2024).

On the other hand, uncontrolled social media usage may negatively affect soldier morale by increasing stress and operational risks. Exposure to misinformation and negative online discourse can undermine trust in leadership and military missions (Bunker, 2024). Furthermore, excessive engagement with social media, particularly during duty hours, may lead to distractions, reduced productivity, and disciplinary consequences (Swarnawati & Wulandari, 2024). Security risks are also a major concern, as soldiers' online activities may expose sensitive military information, putting personnel and operations at risk (Babu & Kumar, 2024). These challenges highlight the need for well-regulated social media policies within military institutions.

Based on these findings, the following hypotheses can be proposed:

H3: Higher psychological resilience is positively associated with higher levels of soldier morale.

H6: Psychological resilience mediates the relationship between social media use and soldier morale

2.4 Mission Length as a Moderator Variable

The duration of military deployments plays a crucial role in shaping the psychological well-being and morale of soldiers. Extended missions can lead to heightened stress, loneliness, and emotional exhaustion, making it essential to identify coping mechanisms that help sustain morale. Social media has emerged as a key tool in this regard, allowing soldiers to maintain communication with family and peers. However, the influence of social media on morale is not uniform and may be moderated by mission length. Bergenfeld (2024) suggests that the psychological impact of social media use varies depending on the length of deployment, with long-term missions amplifying both the positive and negative effects of online engagement.

For soldiers on short-term deployments, social media use may provide an immediate morale boost by reducing homesickness and fostering social support networks. Shorter missions tend to involve lower levels of emotional strain, meaning that social media primarily serves as a supplementary form of connection rather than a critical coping mechanism. In contrast, for soldiers engaged in long-term peacekeeping assignments, social media may become an essential psychological anchor. Research by Grinev (2024) highlights that prolonged mission durations increase reliance on digital communication, leading to both enhanced resilience and increased susceptibility to social media-induced stressors, such as negative news exposure and cyberbullying.

Despite these potential benefits, excessive social media use during extended deployments may also have negative consequences. Bergenfeld (2024) found that long mission durations can intensify feelings of isolation when soldiers perceive online interactions as inadequate substitutes for in-person socialization. Additionally, extended time in high-stress environments can make soldiers more vulnerable to misinformation and emotionally distressing content, ultimately diminishing morale. The moderation effect of mission length suggests that while social media use can be beneficial, its impact is contingent on how long a soldier is deployed and how they engage with digital platforms.

Based on these insights, the following moderating hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Mission length moderates the relationship between social media use and soldier morale.

H5: Mission length moderates the relationship between Psychological resilience and soldier morale

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research approach to examine the relationship between social media use and soldier morale in UN peacekeeping missions. Specifically, it utilizes Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to analyze the direct, indirect, and moderating effects of psychological resilience and mission length on this relationship. Following the sample criteria, 200 respondents were randomly selected using a simple random sampling method to ensure fairness and minimize bias:

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria are established for selecting participants.

a. Inclusion Criteria

Participants must meet the following conditions:

1) Active-duty soldiers deployed in UN peacekeeping missions.

2) Deployment experience of at least one month in the mission area.

3) Regular users of social media (minimum engagement of 2-3 times per week).

4) Willingness to participate and provide informed consent.

b. Exclusion Criteria

The following individuals will be excluded:

1) Soldiers who do not use social media or have restricted access.

2) Personnel on non-peacekeeping assignments (e.g., training missions, administrative roles).

3) Soldiers with less than one month of deployment experience, as they may not yet be significantly affected by mission length.

4) Soldiers who decline to participate or submit incomplete responses.

This selection ensures that the sample accurately reflects the impact of social media use on morale among UN peacekeeping forces while accounting for variations in mission length and psychological resilience.

3.2 Data Collection

A survey was conducted, and questionnaires were distributed to participants to collect information on their social media exposure, psychological resilience, morale, and mission length. The questions covered:

a. Social media use (e.g., frequency of use, purpose, duration).

b. Soldier Morale (Job satisfaction, Motivation Emotional well-being, Stress levels).

c. Psychological Resilience. (Coping strategies, Emotional regulation, Adaptability to mission stress)

d. Mission Length (Short-term (<6 months and Long-term (>6 months).

Table 1. Variable Categories and Measurement Methods

Variable Type	Variable Name	Description	Measurement Indicators
Independent Variable (IV)	Social Media Use Henderson & Paladino (2023), Martins et al. (2022)	The extent and nature of soldiers' engagement with social media during deployment.	- Frequency of use - Purpose (social, news, entertainment, support) - Duration per day (time spent)
Dependent Variable (DV)	Soldier Morale Williams et al. (2023), Thompson & Rivera (2021)	The overall emotional, psychological, and motivational state of soldiers in peacekeeping missions.	- Job satisfaction - Motivation - Emotional well-being - Stress levels
Mediating Variable (MV)	Psychological Resilience Darkwah (2023)	The ability of soldiers to adapt to stress and maintain emotional stability during deployment.	- Coping strategies - Emotional regulation - Adaptability to mission stress
Moderating Variable (ModV)	Mission Length Bartone & Krueger (2018)	The duration of a soldier's deployment, which influences the effect of social media on morale.	- Short-term (<6 months) - Long-term (>6 months)

3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with Partial Least Squares (PLS) will be employed to examine the relationship between social media use, psychological resilience, mission length, and soldier morale. The model explores both direct and indirect effects among these variables. This method is ideal for assessing complex models involving latent variables, especially with small to medium-sized samples. Respondents' perceptions and experiences will be measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

3.4 Structural Model Design

To examine the relationship between social media use and soldier morale, this study develops a conceptual framework incorporating psychological resilience as a mediating variable and mission length as a moderating variable. The model is structured based :
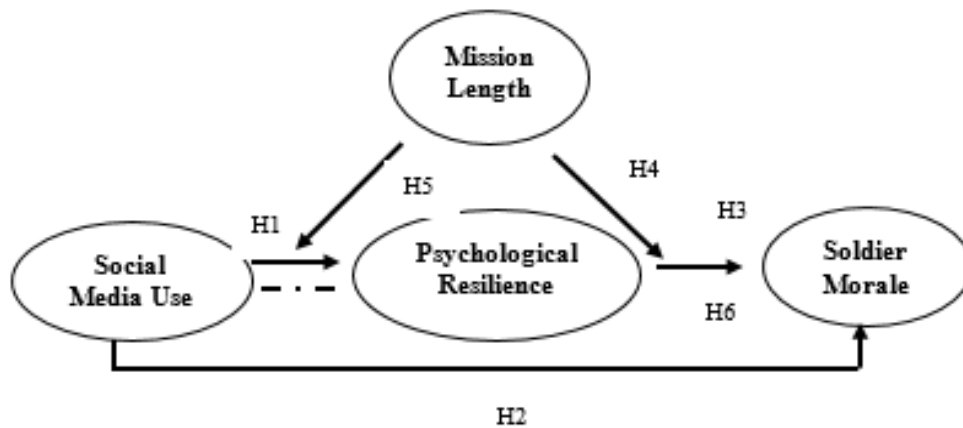
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
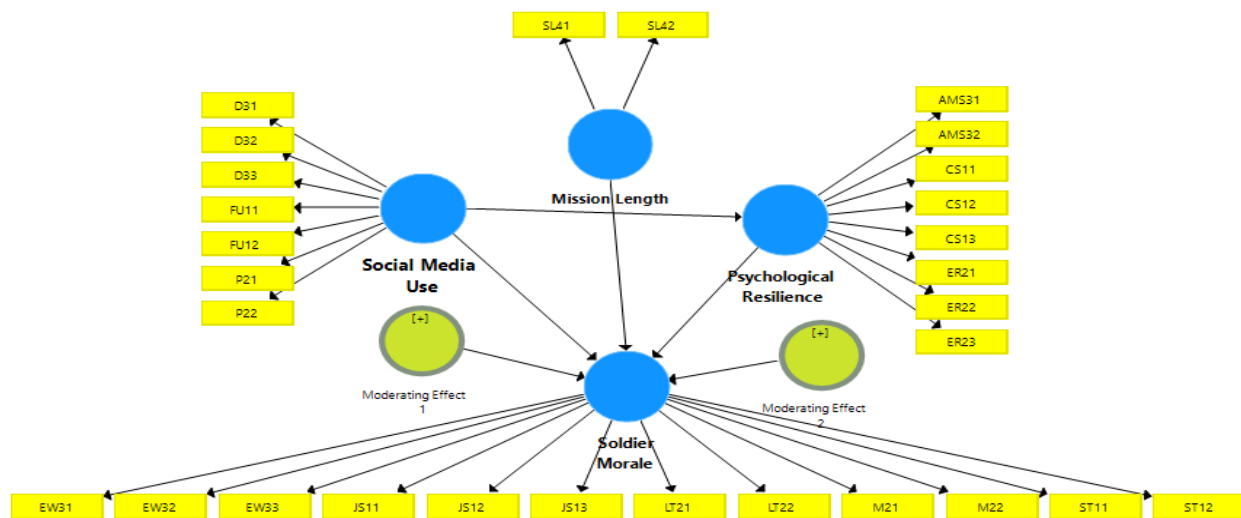
Source: Authors Model

Figure 2. Theorical Concept

Source: Pls data processing

3.4 Data Analysis Steps Using SEM-PLS

a. Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Hair et al., 2021):

   1) Internal Consistency Reliability – Assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), with an acceptable threshold of ≥ 0.7.

   2) Convergent Validity – Measured through Average Variance Extracted (AVE), where AVE ≥ 0.5 indicates satisfactory validity.

   3) Discriminant Validity – Verified using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion to ensure constructs are distinct.

b. Assessment of the Structural Model:

   1) Path Coefficients – Examine the strength and direction of relationships between variables (e.g., social media use → recruitment effectiveness).

   2) R² Value – Evaluates the explanatory power of independent variables on dependent variables (R² ≥ 0.3 is considered moderate).

   3) Moderation Analysis – Interaction terms will be introduced to assess the impact of economic conditions on the relationship between social media usage and recruitment effectiveness.

   4) Bootstrapping Analysis – Conducted with 5,000 resamples to assess the significance of path coefficients (p-values < 0.05 indicate statistical significance).

c. Hypothesis Testing:

The proposed hypotheses will be examined based on the statistical results obtained from the model.

H1: Higher levels of social media use positively influence Psychological Resilience in UN peacekeeping missions

H2: Higher levels of social media use positively influence soldier morale in UN peacekeeping missions

H3: Higher Psychological resilience is positively influence with higher levels of soldier morale

H4: Mission length moderates the relationship between social media use and soldier morale

H5: Mission length moderates the relationship between Psychological resilience and soldier morale

H6: Psychological resilience mediates the relationship between social media use and soldier morale

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

A descriptive analysis was performed to outline the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 2. Respondents' Demographic Profile

Demographic Variable	Categories	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age	18-25 years	40	20
	26-35 years	60	30
	36+ years	100	50
Rank	Junior Officer	60	30
	Senior Officer	120	60
	Enlisted Soldier	20	10
Mission Length	Short-term (<6 months)	30	15
	Long-term (>6 months)	170	85
Social Media Usage	Low (≤1 hour/day)	20	10
	Moderate (1-3 hours/day)	50	25
	High (>3 hours/day)	130	65

The age distribution of respondents reveals that the majority (50%) are aged 36 years and above, followed by 30% in the 26-35 age group, and 20% in the 18-25 age group. This indicates that a significant portion of UN peacekeeping soldiers are older and likely have more experience in deployments. Older personnel may rely less on social media for entertainment but could use it for news, family communication, and professional networking. In contrast, younger soldiers may engage more with social media for social interaction and stress relief, potentially influencing morale differently across age groups.

The rank distribution shows that 60% of respondents are Senior Officers, 30% are Junior Officers, and only 10% are Enlisted Soldiers. This suggests that higher-ranking personnel are more involved in the study, possibly due to their leadership responsibilities and better access to communication tools. Senior Officers may use social media strategically to maintain team morale, monitor global events, or engage with professional networks. On the other hand, Enlisted Soldiers—who form the lowest proportion (10%)—may have limited access to social media due to stricter operational restrictions or fewer communication privileges.

Mission length plays a critical role in understanding soldier morale, as 85% of respondents are deployed for long-term missions (>6 months), while only 15% are in short-term missions (<6 months). Long-term deployments are often associated with higher stress levels, emotional exhaustion, and increased reliance on social media for support and connection. The significantly lower percentage of short-term deployments suggests that most peacekeeping forces experience prolonged separation from family and home, making digital communication crucial. However, extended time in the field could also lead to social media fatigue, disengagement, and psychological distress, which may negatively impact morale.

The social media usage pattern highlights that 65% of respondents use social media heavily (>3 hours per day), 25% use it moderately (1-3 hours per day), and 10% use it minimally (≤1 hour per day). The high percentage of heavy users suggests that social media serves as a primary coping mechanism for peacekeepers, enabling them to stay connected with loved ones, access news, and alleviate stress. However, excessive use may also have downsides, such as exposure to misinformation, distractions, or emotional exhaustion. Given that most respondents are on long-term deployments, the role of social media as a support system is crucial, but it must be balanced to prevent negative psychological effects.

4.2 Outer (Measurement) Model

4.2.1 Convergent Validity Test

Convergent validity measures the strength of the correlation between a construct and its latent variable. The test for convergent validity can be observed from the loading factor of each construct indicator. A loading factor value greater than 0.7 is considered ideal, indicating that the indicator is valid in measuring the intended construct. (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 3. Loading Factor

Variable	Code	Outer Loading	Summary
Social Media Use	D31	0.976	Valid
	D32	0.969	Valid
	D33	0.942	Valid
	FU11	0.953	Valid
	FU12	0.960	Valid
	P21	0.970	Valid
	P22	0.975	Valid
Mission Length	LT21	0.842	Valid
	LT22	0.800	Valid
	ST11	0.822	Valid
	ST12	0.842	Valid
Psychological Resilience	AMS31	0.950	Valid
	AMS32	0.933	Valid
	CS11	0.965	Valid
	CS12	0.974	Valid
	CS13	0.962	Valid
	ER21	0.982	Valid
	ER22	0.974	Valid
	ER23	0.961	Valid
Soldier Morale	EW31	0.886	Valid
	EW32	0.874	Valid
	EW33	0.858	Valid
	JS11	0.831	Valid
	JS12	0.875	Valid
	JS13	0.839	Valid
	M21	0.808	Valid
	M22	0.799	Valid
	SL41	0.981	Valid
	SL42	0.980	Valid

The instrument's validity was assessed through indicator loadings, with an overall validity coefficient of ≥ 0.7, demonstrating that the items effectively measure the intended constructs. This confirms the instrument's appropriateness for the study (Hair et al., 2021).

4.2.2 Discriminant Validity Test

Discriminant validity ensures that a construct is distinct from other constructs in the model. One way to assess this is through Average Variance Extracted (Hair et al., 2021). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs exceeded 0.5, validating convergent validity.

Table 4. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Summary
Mission Length	0.962	Valid
Moderating Effect 1	1.000	Valid
Moderating Effect 2	1.000	Valid
Psychological Resilience_	0.927	Valid
Social Media Use	0.929	Valid
Soldier Morale	0.557	Valid

An AVE value greater than 0.5 signifies that, on average, the indicators explain more than 50% of the variance in the associated construct, confirming convergent validity (Hair et al., 2021).

To evaluate discriminant validity, researchers also consider the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. This criterion is defined as a measure that compares the square root of the AVE with the correlation of latent variables. Thus, the square root of the AVE for each construct must be greater than its correlation with other constructs.The Fornell-Larcker Criterion demonstrated adequate discriminant validity between the constructs. The table below presents the Fornell-Larcker Criterion values:

Based on the data in Table 5, the √AVE of each construct is higher than its correlation with other constructs, confirming

that discriminant validity has been achieved (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 5. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Mission Length	Moderating Effect 1	Moderating Effect 2	Psychological Resilience_	Social Media Use	Soldier Morale
Mission Length	0.981					
Moderating Effect 1	0.796	1.000				
Moderating Effect 2	0.750	0.770	1.000			
Psychological Resilience_	0.607	0.569	0.714	0.963		
Social Media Use	0.797	0.589	0.546	0.598	0.964	
Soldier Morale	0.695	0.304	0.329	0.438	0.445	0.747

4.2.3 Composite Reliability & Cronbach's Alpha

Reliability testing is used to test the accuracy and precision in measuring all constructs. The value of composite reliability and Cronbach alpha are reliable if > 0.7. Here is the composite reliability and Cronbach alpha values of each variable:

Table 6. Cronbach's Alpha & Composite Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Summary
Mission Length	0.960	0.981	Reliable
Moderating Effect 1	1.000	1.000	Reliable
Moderating Effect 2	1.000	1.000	Reliable
Psychological Resilience_	0.989	0.990	Reliable
Social Media Use	0.987	0.989	Reliable
Soldier Morale	0.793	0.817	Reliable

According to the data in Table 6, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceeding 0.70 confirm that the construct demonstrates internal consistency (Hair et al., 2021) and is considered reliable.

4.3 Inner Measurement

4.3.1 R Square

The coefficient of determination (R-Square) quantifies the extent to which endogenous variables are influenced by other variables. As stated by Hair (2021), changes in R-Square values help evaluate whether an independent latent variable has a substantive effect on a dependent latent variable. The R² criteria are categorized as follows:

a. 0.67 – Substantial effect

b. 0.33 – Moderate effect

c. 0.19 – Weak effect

The R² values for this study are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7. R Square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Psychological Resilience_	0.557	0.554
Soldier Morale	0.560	0.548

The Adjusted R² of 0.548 suggests that the model accounts for 55% of the variation in the dependent variable (Hair et al., 2021), while the remaining 45% of the variation is explained by factors not included in this study.

4.3.2 F –Square

In the context of structural equation modeling (including Partial Least Squares SEM) and other quantitative research, Hair and colleagues often reference the guidelines provided in Hair (2021) for interpreting the magnitude of the effect size (f²): a. f² ≥ 0.02: Small effect size b. f² ≥ 0.15: Moderate effect size c. f² ≥ 0.35: Large effect size.

Table 8. f –Square

	Psychological Resilience	Soldier Morale	Summary
Moderating Effect 1		0.000	Weak
Moderating Effect 2		0.002	Weak
Psychological Resilience		0.028	Medium
Social Media Use	0.556	0.481	Strong

In conclusion, the moderating effect on Soldier Morale is minimal, whereas social media usage shows a significant impact.

4.3.3 Standardized Root Mean Square Residual

The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is a commonly used goodness-of-fit measure in structural equation modeling (SEM) that quantifies the average difference between the observed and model-implied correlations. It is calculated by comparing the residuals between the observed and predicted correlation matrices. A smaller SRMR value suggests a better model fit.

Table 9. SRMR

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.078	0.068

SRMR ≤ 0.08: Typically indicates an acceptable model fit

4.4 Structural Model Bootstrapping & Hypothesis Testing

To test hypotheses, bootstrapping is performed to evaluate significance of path coefficients (p-values & t-statistics). The structural model examine the relationship between social media use, psychological resilience, mission length, and soldier morale.

Table 10. Hypotesis Test

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Summary
Direct Effect				
Social Media Use -> Psychological Resilience (H1)	0.598	7.673	0.000	Supported
Social Media Use -> Soldier Morale (H2)	0.144	1.039	0.001	Supported
Psychological Resilience -> Soldier Morale (H3)	0.330	3.007	0.001	Supported
Moderating Effect 1 -> Soldier Morale (H4)	0.048	0.450	0.003	Supported
Moderating Effect 2 -> Soldier Morale (H5)	0.192	1.900	0.029	Supported
Indirect Effect				
Social Media Use -> Psychological Resilience -> Soldier Morale (H6)	0.197	3.032	0.001	Supported

5. Discussion

The results of this study offer valuable insights into the complex relationship between social media use, psychological resilience, and soldier morale in UN peacekeeping missions. The results indicate that social media use has a significant positive impact on psychological resilience ($\beta = 0.598$, T = 7.673, p = 0.000), supporting Hypothesis 1 (H1). This suggests that peacekeepers who actively engage with social media can develop stronger emotional coping mechanisms, possibly due to increased communication with family, access to emotional support, and engagement with stress-relieving digital content.

Interestingly, the direct impact of social media use on soldier morale ($\beta = 0.144$, T = 1.039, p = 0.001) was found to be statistically significant (H2), though with a lower effect size compared to its impact on psychological resilience. This implies that while social media can serve as a morale booster by keeping soldiers connected to their loved ones and reducing loneliness, its effects are not as pronounced unless resilience factors are considered. More importantly, psychological resilience itself has a strong direct impact on soldier morale ($\beta = 0.330$, T = 3.007, p = 0.001), confirming Hypothesis 3 (H3). This finding highlights the role of resilience as a crucial buffer against the stressors of peacekeeping deployments, suggesting that soldiers with higher psychological resilience maintain better morale even in challenging environments.

The study also examined moderating factors that influence the relationship between social media use, psychological resilience, and soldier morale. The first moderating effect ($\beta = 0.048$, T = 0.450, p = 0.003) was statistically significant (H4), indicating that contextual factors such as operational intensity and access to stable internet connectivity may moderate the impact of social media on morale. Furthermore, the second moderating effect ($\beta = 0.192$, T = 1.900, p = 0.029) was also significant (H5), suggesting that mission length plays a key role in shaping how social media use and resilience affect morale. Soldiers on long-term deployments (>6 months) may experience different psychological stressors compared to those on short-term missions (<6 months), leading to varied effects on morale.

A key indirect effect was also identified, where psychological resilience mediates the relationship between social media use and soldier morale ($\beta = 0.197$, T = 3.032, p = 0.001) (H6). This underscores the importance of resilience-building programs in military settings, as social media alone is not enough to sustain high morale; rather, it must be complemented by strong psychological coping mechanisms.

Overall, the study highlights both the benefits and risks of social media use in peacekeeping contexts. While social media facilitates emotional support and communication, it is not a substitute for psychological resilience. Excessive use may also introduce stressors such as misinformation and reduced operational focus. Military leadership and policymakers

should develop balanced social media policies that promote its positive aspects while mitigating risks. Additionally, resilience training should be emphasized to help peacekeepers better cope with the demands of their missions and maintain high morale throughout their deployment.

6. Conclusion

This study highlights the complex relationship between social media use, psychological resilience, and soldier morale in UN peacekeeping missions. The findings suggest that while social media serves as an important tool for communication and emotional support, its impact on morale is significantly influenced by psychological resilience. Soldiers who demonstrate strong coping mechanisms and emotional regulation tend to maintain higher morale, even in challenging deployment conditions.

Additionally, the length of deployment plays a crucial role in shaping soldiers' experiences. Those on long-term missions face greater psychological stress and are more reliant on social media for emotional connection. However, excessive social media use can introduce challenges such as misinformation exposure, increased stress, and reduced focus on operational duties.

These insights emphasize the need for military leadership to implement structured resilience-building programs and establish balanced social media policies. Encouraging responsible social media use while strengthening psychological resilience can help ensure that peacekeepers maintain their well-being and effectiveness in the field. Future research should explore additional factors, such as cultural influences and specific coping strategies, to further enhance the support systems available for peacekeeping personnel.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on psychological resilience, social media use, and soldier morale in peacekeeping missions by integrating insights from multiple theoretical perspectives. The findings reinforce the *Stress and Coping Theory*, which suggests that individuals rely on adaptive coping mechanisms, such as social media engagement, to manage stress in challenging environments. This study extends this theory by demonstrating that while social media can enhance coping capacity, its benefits are contingent upon the user's psychological resilience.

6.2 Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for military leadership, policymakers, and mental health professionals involved in UN peacekeeping missions.

First, the significant role of psychological resilience in maintaining soldier morale underscores the need for resilience-building programs as part of pre-deployment and in-mission training. Peacekeeping forces should be provided with structured psychological training to enhance their coping strategies, emotional regulation, and adaptability to stress, reducing the risk of mental fatigue and burnout during long deployments.

Second, given the dual impact of social media, military leadership should develop balanced social media policies that promote healthy digital engagement while minimizing risks such as misinformation, cyber threats, and excessive screen time. Training programs should educate peacekeepers on responsible social media use, helping them leverage online communication for emotional support without compromising their mental well-being or operational focus.

Additionally, the study highlights the importance of mission length considerations in policy-making. Soldiers on long-term deployments (>6 months) experience higher psychological stress and reliance on social media, making additional mental health support crucial for this group. Military organizations should implement periodic psychological check-ins, structured decompression programs, and access to mental health professionals to help soldiers maintain resilience throughout extended deployments.

6.3 Recommendations for Further Study

This research highlights the need for continuous assessment and adaptation of well-being strategies. Military organizations should conduct regular evaluations of soldiers' mental health and social media habits, ensuring that interventions remain effective and responsive to evolving digital and psychological challenges.

By integrating these practical measures, military leadership can create a more supportive environment for peacekeepers, ensuring their psychological resilience, operational effectiveness, and overall well-being during missions.

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Data availability statement

The data supporting this study's findings are available on request from the corresponding author. However, due to privacy or ethical restrictions, the data are not publicly available.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

Open access

Copyrights

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Questionnaire List

Below is a structured questionnaire with dimensions and indicators for measuring the Impact of Social Media Use on Soldier Morale with Psychological Resilience as a Mediating Role and Mission Length as a Moderating Effect. Respondents will answer each item on a 5-point Likert scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Be honest in your responses as they will help improve the effectiveness of recruitment strategies.

Questionnaire on Social Media Use, Psychological Resilience, and Soldier Morale in UN Peacekeeping Missions

Section 1: Demographic Information

Age: ___

Rank: (☐ Private ☐ NCO ☐ Officer ☐ Other)

Years of Military Service: ___

Current Deployment Location: ___

Length of Current Deployment: (☐ Less than 6 months ☐ More than 6 months)

Section 2: Social Media Use (Independent Variable - IV)

1. I use social media regularly during my deployment.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

2. I primarily use social media to stay connected with family and friends while deployed.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

3. I rely on social media to stay informed about news and current events.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

4. I use social media for entertainment (e.g., watching videos, browsing memes, playing games) during deployment.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

5. I use social media as a source of emotional support during my deployment.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

6. On average, I spend more than one hour per day on social media while deployed.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

7. Social media use positively affects my overall well-being and morale during deployment.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

Section 3 : Soldier Morale

1. I feel satisfied with my role and responsibilities in the mission.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

2. I feel motivated to perform my duties effectively during deployment.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

3. I maintain a positive attitude towards my mission and its objectives.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

4. I feel emotionally stable despite the challenges of deployment.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

5. I experience high levels of stress during my deployment.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

6. I feel valued and supported by my team and leadership.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

7. I believe my work in this mission has a meaningful impact.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

8. I feel socially connected and engaged with others in my unit.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

9. I am able to manage stress effectively while on deployment.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

10. Overall, I feel a sense of morale and well-being while on this mission.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

Section 4 : Psychological Resilience

1. I am able to stay calm and focused under stressful situations during deployment.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

2. I use effective coping strategies to manage stress while on deployment.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

3. I quickly adapt to unexpected challenges and changes in my mission.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

4. I am able to regulate my emotions and maintain a positive outlook during difficult situations.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

5. I seek support from my peers or superiors when dealing with stress.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

6. I feel confident in my ability to handle the psychological demands of deployment.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

7. Even in high-pressure situations, I remain mentally strong and composed.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

8. I recover quickly from setbacks or emotionally challenging experiences during deployment.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

Section 5 : Mission Length

1. The length of my deployment affects my overall morale and well-being.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

2. As my deployment length increases, I find it more challenging to maintain motivation and engagement.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

3. Longer deployments make it harder for me to stay emotionally connected with family and friends.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

4. The duration of my mission influences how I use social media to cope with stress.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree