



A Self-Determination Motivational Approach To The Capacity Development Of The Mobile Brigade (Brimob) Of The South Sulawesi Regional Police

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Abstract

This study examines the capacity development of the Mobile Brigade (Brimob) of the South Sulawesi Regional Police through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). As a semi-military organisation that demands strict discipline yet simultaneously requires personnel with strong intrinsic motivation, Brimob constitutes a paradoxical but instructive context for understanding human motivation. Drawing on Deci and Ryan's (2000) framework of three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—the research investigates how the fulfilment of these needs drives sustainable capacity development. A qualitative case-study design was employed, with purposively selected informants including unit commanders, operational and high-achieving members, human resource and finance officers, and an organisational partner. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis, and were examined using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. The findings indicate that autonomy is constrained by the command structure at the point of recruitment and assignment, yet expands meaningfully in professional judgement, budget planning, and the space granted for member innovation. Competence is supported through structured operational training and educational access, although advanced education remains limited and specialist expertise is scarce. Relatedness emerges as the strongest need, sustained by esprit de corps, family-oriented welfare schemes, and warm partner relationships. The study concludes that intrinsic motivation in Brimob is anchored primarily in relatedness and pride, while autonomy support and competence development require deliberate strengthening. Policy recommendations include autonomy-supportive supervision, expanded specialist and higher-education pathways, and the institutionalisation of cohesion-building programmes to optimise capacity development.

Keywords: self-determination theory; intrinsic motivation; capacity development; basic psychological needs; Mobile Brigade (Brimob)

Introduction

The capacity development of public organisations is a complex process that involves not only structural and systemic dimensions but also the psychological make-up of the individuals who constitute the organisation. As the principal driver of human behaviour, motivation occupies a central position in determining the success of capacity development because it shapes the extent to which individuals are willing to learn, grow, and contribute optimally (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). The Mobile Brigade (Brimob) of the South Sulawesi Regional Police, as a semi-military organisation, faces a distinctive challenge in cultivating sustainable motivation amid heavy operational demands, high safety risks, and constant psychological pressure.

Self-Determination Theory has reshaped scholarly understanding of what optimises worker motivation by clarifying how the work context influences three basic psychological needs—competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné et al., 2022). When these needs are satisfied, individuals experience intrinsic motivation characterised by interest, vitality, and full engagement; when they are frustrated, controlled motivation or amotivation tends to follow (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). Understanding the determinants of intrinsic motivation is therefore a precondition for sustainable organisational capacity.

Empirical evidence on the educational profile of Brimob personnel highlights a potential constraint on the satisfaction of the competence need. As shown in Table 1, of 1,890 personnel, the overwhelming majority hold senior-secondary qualifications, while only a small fraction have attained higher education. This distribution suggests limited access to competence development through advanced education, which may, in turn, attenuate intrinsic motivation for self-improvement (Kuvaas, 2009; Xu, 2022).

Table 1. Educational Attainment of Personnel of the Mobile Brigade, South Sulawesi Regional Police

No	Educational Level	Number	Percentage
1	Senior secondary (SLTA)	1,733	91.7%
2	Bachelor's (S1)	119	6.3%
3	Master's (S2)	34	1.8%
4	Doctorate (S3)	4	0.2%
	Total	1,890	100%

Source: Mobile Brigade, South Sulawesi Regional Police, 2025.

Access to competence-building programmes is similarly uneven. The number of personnel participating in officer-formation and specialist education remains modest relative to total strength, a gap that may affect not only the competence need but also autonomy (when members perceive few opportunities to grow) and relatedness (when differential treatment is felt). Recent studies confirm that need-supportive work environments are critical to building intrinsic motivation in the public sector (Papadopoulou & Dimitriadis, 2019; Liu et al., 2022).

The autonomy need is theoretically the most challenging to satisfy within a rigid command structure. Deci and Ryan (2000) emphasise that autonomy denotes volition and endorsement of one's actions rather than independence without limits. In paramilitary contexts, autonomy may coexist with hierarchy when personnel retain professional discretion within the bounds of assigned tasks (Forner et al., 2020). The extent to which Brimob members experience such volition is an empirical question central to this study.

Relatedness—the sense of belonging and meaningful connection—has long been associated with the cohesion of disciplined organisations. *Esprit de corps*, mutual support under pressure, and family-oriented welfare schemes can nourish relatedness and thereby reinforce intrinsic motivation and retention (Deci et al., 2017; Slemp et al., 2018). For a unit whose members frequently undertake high-risk and geographically dispersed deployments, the quality of social bonds is likely to be decisive for sustained engagement.

Despite the breadth of SDT applications in developed-country settings, its use in semi-military organisations in Indonesia remains scarce. Prior research underscores that supervisor support for autonomy, competence, and development is fully mediated by intrinsic motivation in shaping public-sector work performance (Kuvaas, 2009), and that autonomy-supportive management significantly enhances intrinsic motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Olafsen et al., 2021). Yet how these mechanisms operate in a context that emphasises obedience while requiring intrinsic drive has not been adequately explored (Sugiyono, 2021).

Accordingly, this study analyses how the fulfilment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness drives the capacity development of the Mobile Brigade of the South Sulawesi Regional Police. The novelty of the study lies in applying SDT contextually to an Indonesian paramilitary police organisation through a dyadic, qualitative case-study design (Creswell, 2007). The findings are expected to inform the design of need-supportive interventions that strengthen intrinsic motivation and, by extension, sustainable organisational capacity (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné et al., 2022).

Materials And Methods

This study adopts a qualitative case-study design (Creswell, 2007) to obtain an in-depth understanding of how the three basic psychological needs are fulfilled within the capacity-development processes of the Mobile Brigade of the South Sulawesi Regional Police, located in Makassar. A qualitative approach was selected because the satisfaction of psychological needs is a profoundly personal and contextual phenomenon that cannot be captured through quantitative measurement alone (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Informants were chosen purposively to provide a dyadic perspective and comprised unit commanders, operational and high-achieving members, officials of the human resource and finance divisions, an official of the regional police human resource bureau, and an external organisational partner that uses Brimob services.

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews lasting 60–90 minutes per informant, which were recorded and transcribed; direct observation of organisational climate and social interaction; and document study of personnel-management policies and reports. Interview protocols were developed from the three dimensions of Deci and Ryan's (2000) framework. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014)—data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing—conducted iteratively through thematic coding. Source triangulation, comparing the accounts of leaders and members, was used to ensure the credibility of the interpretation within the theoretical framework.

3. Results and Discussion

Autonomy

The fulfilment of the autonomy need in Brimob is marked by a tension between structural constraint and professional latitude. At the point of entry, autonomy is limited: recruitment and assignment to the corps historically followed a centralised selection in which members could not decline placement. This constraint shapes the initial career trajectory and signals that, in a paramilitary setting, volition is bounded by command imperatives. Beyond entry, however, autonomy expands in meaningful ways. Genuine discretion is exercised in professional judgement, in the planning and proposal of budgets, and—most notably—in the space granted for innovation. Budget planning originates from the unit itself rather than being imposed from above, and the leadership maintains an open posture toward grievances and suggestions, allowing concerns to be conveyed transparently. This bottom-up planning latitude and openness to member input constitute concrete forms of autonomy support within an otherwise hierarchical structure.

This pattern reveals that autonomy in Brimob is not uniform but domain-specific: highly constrained in placement, yet substantial in operational and developmental matters. Members who pursue innovation are granted latitude, although such latitude is largely exercised outside formal duty hours and is endorsed by the leadership only after results become visible. Autonomy thus operates as a conditional rather than an unconditional resource.

Table 2. Fulfilment of the Autonomy Need in the Mobile Brigade, South Sulawesi

Autonomy Sub-Dimension	Condition	Field Finding (This Study)
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Recruitment & placement	Constrained	Centralised selection; members historically could not decline placement
Professional judgement	Supported	Genuine discretion exercised in executing assigned operational tasks
Budget planning	Supported	Proposals originate bottom-up from the unit rather than imposed from above
Voice & grievances	Supported	Leadership open to suggestions; concerns conveyed transparently
Space for innovation	Conditional	Latitude granted, but largely outside duty hours and endorsed only after results appear

Source: Processed from interviews, observation, and document study, 2024–2025.

Interpreted through Deci and Ryan (2000), these findings show that autonomy in Brimob is best understood as bounded volition: members endorse the corps as a personal calling even when initial placement was directed, and they experience volition where professional discretion is permitted. The negative experience of constrained placement is offset by autonomy-supportive practices in planning and innovation, consistent with evidence that autonomy support is fully mediated by intrinsic motivation in shaping public-sector performance (Kuvaas, 2009) and that need-supportive design enhances autonomous motivation (Liu et al., 2022). To optimise capacity development, it is recommended that the leadership institutionalise autonomy-supportive supervision—offering rationale for directives, soliciting input, and formally legitimising in-service innovation—so that bounded autonomy is converted into a durable source of intrinsic motivation (Gagné et al., 2022).

2. Competence

The competence need is supported in Brimob primarily through a structured architecture of operational training. Personnel undergo specialised courses aligned with the corps' core functions—riot control, explosive-ordnance disposal, counter-terrorism, chemical-biological-radiological-nuclear response, and jungle warfare—delivered both through independent unit exercises and through centrally budgeted programmes. This training regime provides the optimal challenge and feedback that, according to SDT, nurture a sense of mastery.

Educational access reinforces the competence need. Personnel are encouraged to pursue higher education, supported by recognition-of-prior-learning and online classes, and there are no formal ceilings on progression from bachelor's to doctoral study, subject to leave that does not disrupt duty. The prevailing orientation treats current attainment as provisional rather than terminal, with competence regarded as something to be continuously developed through cross-learning and further study.

Despite these supports, a competence gap persists in specialist domains. An acute shortage of personnel with scientific backgrounds—for instance, chemistry and biology graduates needed for CBRN functions—coincides with limited applicant interest in specialist officer pathways. This scarcity constrains the corps' ability to satisfy the competence need at the level of advanced, technical mastery.

Table 3. Fulfilment of the Competence Need in the Mobile Brigade, South Sulawesi

Competence Sub-Dimension	Condition	Field Finding (This Study)
Operational training	Strong	Structured courses: riot control, EOD, counter-terrorism, CBRN, jungle warfare
Delivery mechanism	Adequate	Independent unit exercises plus centrally budgeted programmes
Higher-education access	Developing	Encouraged via RPL and online classes; no formal ceiling to doctoral study
Advanced/specialist expertise	Limited	Shortage of chemistry/biology graduates for CBRN; low specialist-pathway interest

Source: Processed from interviews, observation, and document study, 2024–2025.

Within Deci and Ryan's (2000) framework, Brimob's training architecture and educational pathways effectively satisfy the competence need at the operational level, generating feelings of effectiveness and mastery that sustain intrinsic motivation. The persistent specialist gap, however, signals an unmet competence need at the technical-scientific frontier, which evidence links to lower engagement when challenge outstrips available capability (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). To strengthen capacity development, it is recommended that the corps expand specialist recruitment and dedicated higher-education quotas, institutionalise constructive performance feedback, and create competence-based career maps—measures shown to convert competence support into durable intrinsic motivation (Xu, 2022; Liu et al., 2022).

3. Relatedness

Relatedness emerges as the most strongly satisfied of the three needs. Membership in Brimob is bound up with pride and esprit de corps; a powerful sense of belonging derives from the corps' distinctive function, discipline, and shared identity. This collective identification provides the affective glue that sustains engagement under demanding conditions.

Relatedness extends to family welfare and external partnerships. Beyond salary and performance allowances, families are engaged through the Bhayangkari association and savings schemes, broadening the circle of belonging to members' households. Relationships with partner organisations, in turn, have matured over time into familial closeness and fluid, unguarded communication.

The fulfilment of relatedness is further supported by collaborative empowerment programmes and an ethic of communication that the human resource bureau actively cultivates. Members are encouraged to build constructive interactions internally, across the police institution, and with the wider community—although the operational nature of Brimob's tasks can narrow opportunities for direct community engagement.

Table 4. Fulfilment of the Relatedness Need in the Mobile Brigade, South Sulawesi

Relatedness Sub-Dimension	Condition	Field Finding (This Study)
Esprit de corps & pride	Strong	Powerful belonging from distinctive function, discipline, and shared identity
Family welfare	Strong	Bhayangkari association and savings schemes extend belonging to households
Partner relationships	Strong	Matured into familial closeness and fluid, unguarded communication
Community engagement	Constrained	Operational task nature narrows opportunities for direct community contact

Source: Processed from interviews, observation, and document study, 2024–2025.

Interpreted through Deci and Ryan (2000), the strong satisfaction of relatedness—anchored in pride, esprit de corps, family inclusion, and warm partner relations—functions as the primary engine of intrinsic motivation in Brimob, compensating in part for the constrained autonomy and the specialist competence gap identified above. This accords with evidence that relatedness sustains motivation and reduces turnover intention, particularly under conditions of risk and interdependence (Van den Broeck et al., 2016; Gagné et al., 2022). To consolidate this advantage, it is recommended that the corps institutionalise cohesion-building and family-welfare programmes and embed structured community-engagement activities, thereby extending relatedness beyond the unit and reinforcing the internalisation of organisational values (Slemp et al., 2018).

4. Conclusion

The capacity development of the Mobile Brigade of the South Sulawesi Regional Police is shaped by an uneven fulfilment of the three basic psychological needs. Autonomy is experienced as bounded volition: tightly constrained at recruitment and placement, yet substantial in professional judgement, budget planning, and member innovation. Competence is well supported at the operational level through structured training and educational access, but remains unmet at the specialist-scientific frontier, where personnel shortages persist. Relatedness is the strongest and most consistently satisfied need, sustained by pride, esprit de corps, family-welfare schemes, and warm partner relationships, and it serves as the principal anchor of intrinsic motivation. The study concludes that strengthening Brimob's capacity requires autonomy-supportive supervision that legitimises in-service initiative, expanded specialist and higher-education pathways with competence-based career maps, and the institutionalisation of cohesion and family-welfare programmes—so that the three needs are satisfied in an integrated manner and intrinsic motivation becomes a durable foundation for sustainable organisational capacity.

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