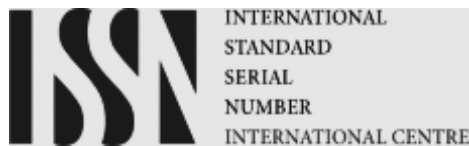




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Influence of Personality Traits and Types of Operation on Mental Health of Military Personnel

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of personality traits and types of operation on mental health of military personnel. Cross-sectional survey design was adopted and data gathered from selected 238 military personnel in Odogbo barracks, Ibadan. More of the respondents 221 (92.9%) were males, while the other 17 (7.1%) were females. Age distribution ranged from 20 years old and 54 years, with an average age of 33.8 (SD = 8.8). Findings revealed that personality traits (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience) jointly predicted mental health $\{R = .29; R^2 = .09; F(5, 232) = 4.36; P < .01\}$; however, only conscientiousness ($\beta = .20; t = 2.09; P < .05$) independently predicted mental health. Finally, type of operation had no significant influence on mental health among military personnel $[F(5, 232) = .19; P > .05]$. It was therefore concluded that personality traits such as extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness were significant correlates of mental health of military personnel. It was therefore recommended that profiles of military intake be made on their personality and possibly recruited and placed according to their personality traits. An individual with increased level of extroversion could be given upper hand in selection than someone low in extroversion.

Keywords: Personality Traits, Military Operation, Mental Health, Military Personnel

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Introduction

Mental health is a positive concept related to the social and emotional wellbeing of individuals and communities (Galderisi, Heinz, Kastrup, Beezhold & Sartorius, 2015). The concept is culturally defined, but generally relates to the enjoyment of

life, ability to cope with stresses and sadness, the fulfillment of goals and potential, and a sense of connection to others (Keyes, 2014). The term 'Mental health' is often misunderstood and interpreted as referring to mental ill-health. This can be confusing, especially since 'Mental health



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services' have been mostly concerned with the treatment of mental illness, rather than Mental health per se. Mental health is a desirable quality in its own right and is more than the absence of mental ill-health (Connell, O'Cathain & Brazier, 2014). It is relevant to all people, regardless of whether they are currently experiencing, or recovering from a mental illness. According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), it was affirmed that mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. To emphasize the extent to which mental health is considered important, WHO ascertained that mental health is part of general health, and it goes beyond just the absence of mental illness (WHO, 2019). In fact, a positive correlation was found between mental health and physical health (WHO, 2001). The fact that mental health is considered a right for every individual (Cosgrove & Shaughnessy, 2020), it implies that regardless of age, gender and even occupation, mental health is desirable for all and sundry. This also includes the military personnel. Serving as a military personnel has been connected with poor mental health in most previous studies (Inoue, Shawler, Jordan & Jackson, 2022; Ravindran, Morley, Stephens, Stanley & Reger, 2020). Inoue et al. (2022) connected the poor mental health to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

A comprehensive review of the literature on military service, mental health, and PTSD concluded that active duty officers, particularly those who have served and are serving in combat suffer substantial mental health problems (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). This review finds that retired soldiers suffer from depression, drug and alcohol dependency, homelessness, or suicide. Estimates of PTSD rates among those who served in war zones ranged from 4 to 45 percent (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). Lasebikan and Ijomanta (2018) reported that approximately 13.5% of military personnel reported lifetime cannabis use, while approximately 4.9% reported lifetime cannabis dependence in West Africa. While this prevalence is considered high, it has also been established that it is quite under-reported, as the result could not be generalized to military personnel in Nigeria, as a case study. Considering the importance of having sane military personnel following the current high level of insecurity due to the ravaging bandits and Boko Haram insurgence, it is vital to put the mental health of the military personnel into consideration. Just as it has been established that type of job contributes to mental health (Fashola, Kenku & Obasi, 2018), it is also of importance to note that there are various factors that could influence the mental health of military personnel, however, this study will unravel the role of personality traits and type of military operation in the mental health of military personnel in Nigeria.



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Personality traits can be defined as the unique features that differentiate individuals from each other (Yunus et al. 2018). The most common description of personality traits has been done within the big-five personality traits (Goldberg, 1993). The commonly referred big five includes the following; Extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. According to Goldberg (1993), extraversion was linked to dominance, being social and making friends easily. Agreeableness is characterized by acts of altruism, emotional support, nurturance, among others (Goldberg, 1993; Yunus et al. 2018). Conscientiousness is linked with being diligent, achievement focused and been thorough (McCrae & John, 1992).

Another term for neuroticism is emotional instability, linked with distress experience (McCrae & John, 1992). Openness to experience is linked with high level of creativity, and believe in unusual ideals (McCrae & John, 1992). These five personality traits could play significant role in mental health of military personnel, as it has been established in other similar research on other population. For instance, Shirazi, Khan and Ansari (2012) affirmed that agreeableness and openness to experience were significant and positive correlates of mental health among students. Also, Habibi, Sadeghi, Haghrangbar, Madanipour and Azarnoosh (2013) reported that neuroticism, extraversion, and

conscientiousness were significant correlates of mental health indicators among addicts. Mourelatos (2021) also reported that personality traits such as extraversion and openness to experience were significant correlates of mental health during COVID-19 pandemic. Lincoln (2008) asserted that personality traits such as conscientiousness and extraversion were positive determinants of mental health. Another variable that could influence mental health of military personnel is type of operation. Soldiers are put in a context that is not only unfamiliar, but also actively hostile. Veterans of recent combat operations report a number of significant stressors unique to the combat zone including the threat of enemy attacks, dealing with the deaths of fellow soldiers, being responsible for killing another human being, and handling human remains (Hoge et al., 2004). In the military, various types of operation exist. This could be Internal Security (IS) and External Security (ES). Internal security operation refers to various military operations carried out within the geographical location of Nigeria. So far, there are a total of nine (9) various operations that military personnel are being deployed to namely; Operation Lafiya Dole, Delta Safe, Gama Aiki, Awatse, Sharan Daji, Mesa, Maximum Safety and Operation Accord. External security operation refers to designations that involve protection outside the shores of the country. As regards external security, it often times involves operations as designated by



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world bodies such as United Nations and African Union (AU). It usually comes in terms of peace keeping, among others. Various external operations have been executed in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, etc. It is hypothesized that these various types of operations will have significant influence on the mental health of military personnel. Having given a background to the study, the broad objective of the study is to investigate the influence of personality traits and type of operation on mental health among military personnel. The following hypotheses were generated and tested in this study;

1. Personality traits (extroversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) will have significant joint and independent influence on mental health of military personnel.
2. Type of operation will have significant influence on mental health of military personnel.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design. The study aims at investigating the influence of personality traits and types of operation on mental health of military personnel in Ibadan. The dependent variable is mental health while the independent variables were personality traits (extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness) and types of operation.

Questionnaire was used to gather data from the respondents on the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

Research Setting

The study was conducted in Odogbo military barracks in Oyo states. The choice of this setting is based on the fact that it has the largest number of military domicile in the state. Headquarters 2 Division Nigerian Army is located in Ibadan, Oyo State. It was established during the civil war. It is charged with the responsibility of securing its Area of Responsibility (AOR) covering the South Western flank of Nigeria and also ensuring that the borders located in its AOR are secured. The division is a mechanized infantry with affiliated combat support and combat service support units.

Participants

This study considered military personnel in the military barracks. The researcher administered a total of 300 research instruments, however, only 238 were retrieved. Convenience sampling technique was adopted in this study. This was because sample participants were contacted at settings where it was easy to locate them, military barracks.

Instrument

Data was gathered through the means of a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised of three sections; Sections A, B and C.



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Section A: this section consisted of socio-demographic items which will require the participants to respond to. This includes; sex, age, type of operation, etc

Section B: mental health

This section measured mental health, using a scale developed by Hendrick et al., (2009). The mental health scale consisted of 22-item. The scale was developed to measure psychological health. The items will be answered on a 6-point likert scale ranging from; 1 (All of the time), 2 (most of the time), 3 (a good bit of the time), 4 (some of the time), 5 (a little of the time), 6 (none of the time). The scale developer reported adequate reliability ranging from 0.42 to 0.74. The local reliability in this study was $\alpha = 0.78$.

Section C: Big-five personality

This comprise of a 44-Item Personality Inventory-(TIPI) developed by John, Nauman and Soto (2008) for measuring Big-Five personality dimensions. The 44-Item Personality Inventory-(TIPI) includes two items for each of the Big-Five personality dimensions. It is a 5-point Likert response format, the response categories ranging from 1: 'disagree strongly' up to 5: 'agree strongly'. As a measure of the Big-Five dimensions of personality, the TIPI has been validated against standard Big-Five instruments. The Test-retest reliability is therefore a more appropriate reliability measure for such brief scales. They were 0.77 for Extraversion, 0.71 for Agreeableness,

0.76 for Conscientiousness, 0.70 for Emotional Stability and 0.62 for Openness, indicating that the scale provides a stable measure of personality over time. Hence, we chose to adopt the TIPI rather than a longer personality measure to reduce transient measurement errors resulting from participant fatigue, frustration and boredom associated with completing several survey instruments in combination with a lengthy experimental session. However, this study reports the following local reliability of the scale; extraversion $\alpha = .69$; neuroticism $\alpha = .70$; agreeableness $\alpha = .78$; conscientiousness $\alpha = .79$ and openness to experience $\alpha = .76$.

Procedure

The researcher sought for the approval from the selected barrack to carry out a survey research in the barrack. The process of carrying out the research involved brief summary of what the research is all about, seeking the consent of participants and assuring them of confidentiality and anonymity. All this was contained in the instruction given to the participants.

Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics was used in the analysis of the data collected. Hypothesis one was tested using zero-order correlation, hypothesis two was tested using multiple regression analysis, while hypothesis three was tested using one-way analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA).

**RESULTS**

A total of three hundred (300) military personnel were sampled, however, two

hundred and thirty eight (238) were retrieved. Three hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis and one-way Analysis of Variance.

Table 1: Socio-demographic distribution of respondents

SN	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Gender		
	Male	221	92.9
	Female	17	7.1
2	Educational qualification		
	Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE)	116	48.7
	National Diploma (OND)/National Certificate of Education (NCE)	56	23.5
	University/Higher National Diploma (HND)	13	22.3
3	Years in service		
	Less than 5 years	49	20.6
	5-9 years	139	58.4
	10-14 years	48	20.2
	15 years above	2	(0.8)
4	Department		
	General Duties	44	18.5
	Logistics	56	23.5
	Administration	101	42.4
	Others	37	15.6
	Total	238	100

Frequency distribution showed that more of the respondents 221 (92.9%) were males, while the other 17 (7.1%) were females. Age distribution ranged from 20 years old and 54 years, with an average age of 33.8 (SD = 8.8). Educational qualification showed that more of the respondents 116 (48.7%) were SSCE holders, 56 (23.5%) indicated to have primary school leaving certificates, 53 (22.3%) were

OND/NCE holders, while the other 13 (5.5%) were University degree holders/Higher National Diploma. As regards years in service, more of the soldiers 139 (58.4%) indicated to have spent between 5 and 9 years in the military, 49 (20.6%) have spent less than 5 years in the military, 48 (20.2%) have spent between 10 and 14 years in the military, while the other 2 (0.8%) have spent over 15 years in service.



More of the respondents 101 (42.4%) indicated to be in the administrative department, 56 (23.5%) were in

logistics, 44 (18.5%) were in general duties, while the other 37 (15.6%) were in other departments.

Table 2: Zero-Order Correlation Showing the Relationship Between Personality Traits and Mental Health

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Mental Health	78.23	16.49	-	.22**	.18**	.25**	.01	.21**
2 Extroversion	14.40	3.19		-	.75**	.70**	.58**	.39**
3 Agreeableness	15.77	3.18			-	.64**	.54**	.38**
4 Conscientiousness	15.79	2.79				-	.58**	.40**
5 Neuroticism	13.34	3.26					-	.36**
6 Openness to experience	20.94	3.86						-

****Significant at 0.01**

Table 2 presents zero order correlation between personality traits (extroversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, neuroticism and openness to experience) and mental health. It is shown on Table 4.1 that extroversion ($r = .22$; $P < .01$), agreeableness ($r = .18$; $P < .01$), conscientiousness ($r = .25$; $P < .01$) and openness to experience ($r = .21$; $P < .01$) were significant positive correlates of mental health. This implies that the higher the extroversion, agreeableness, openness to experience and conscientiousness of military personnel, the higher their mental

health. However, it was discovered that there exists no significant relationship between mental health and neuroticism ($r = .01$; $P > .05$). This partially confirms the stated hypothesis.

Hypothesis one stated that personality traits (extroversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) will jointly and independently predict mental health of military personnel in Ibadan. This was tested using multiple regression analysis and the result is presented on Table 3;

Table 3: Multiple Regression Summary Table Showing Personality Traits as Predictors of Mental Health

Predictors	β	t	P	R	R ²	F	P
Extroversion	.11	1.04	>.05				
Agreeableness	-.02	-.20	>.05				
Conscientiousness	.20	2.09	<.05	.29	.09	4.36	<.01
Neuroticism	-.12	-1.41	>.05				
Openness to experience	.13	1.89	>.05				



Table 3 presents the influence of personality traits (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience) on mental health among military personnel in Odogbo barracks. It is presented on Table 4.2 that personality traits (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience) jointly predicted mental health { $R = .29$; $R^2 = .09$; $F(5, 232) = 4.36$; $P < .01$ }. Collectively, personality traits (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience) accounted for

about 9% variance in mental health among military personnel in Odogbo barracks. However, only conscientiousness ($\beta = .20$; $t = 2.09$; $P < .05$) independently predicted mental health among military personnel. This partially confirmed the stated hypothesis.

Hypothesis two stated that type of operation will have significant influence on mental health among military personnel in Odogbo barracks. This was tested using One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the result is presented on Table 4.3;

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA Summary Table Showing the Effect of Type of Operation on Mental Health

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Groups	268.76	5	53.75	.19	>.05
Within Groups	64169.53	232	276.59		
Total	64438.29	237			

Table 4 presents results on the influence of type of operation on mental health among military personnel in Odogbo barracks. There are a total of twelve types of operation within the past 14 years within the Nigerian Army (United Nations, African Union, Operation Burst, Operation Lafiya Dole, Operation Delta Safe, Operation Gama

Aiki, Operation Awatse, Operation Sharan Daji, Operation Mesa, Operation Maximum Safety, and Operation Accord). It is shown that type of operation had no significant influence on mental health among military personnel [$F(5, 232) = .19$; $P > .05$]. This negates the stated hypothesis.

in Odogbo barracks, Ibadan. It was discovered that personality traits (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience) jointly

DISCUSSION

The study investigated the influence of personality traits and type of operation on mental health of military personnel



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predicted mental health. Collectively, personality traits (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience) accounted for about 9% variance in mental health among military personnel in Odogbo barracks. However, only conscientiousness independently predicted mental health among military personnel. This partially confirmed the stated hypothesis. This is line with the studies of Shirazi, Khan and Ansari (2012), who affirmed that agreeableness and openness to experience were significant and positive correlates of mental health among students. Also, Habibi, Sadeghi, Haghlangbar, Madanipour and Azarnoosh (2013) reported that neuroticism, extraversion, and conscientiousness were significant correlates of mental health indicators among addicts. Mourelatos (2021) also reported that personality traits such as extraversion and openness to experience were significant correlates of mental health during COVID-19 pandemic. It was also discovered that type of operation had no significant influence on mental health among military personnel. This negates the stated hypothesis.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study; Firstly, this study concludes that increase in personality traits such as extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience is a significant determinant

of increased mental health. This means that an outgoing soldier with high level of exposure and highly conscientious tend to report better mental health.

This study also concludes that personality traits (extroversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) were significant joint determinants of mental health; while only conscientiousness had independent influence on mental health among military personnel in Ibadan. Finally, type of operation that military personnel are deployed to does not have any influence on their level of mental health.

Recommendations

The mental health impairments experienced by soldiers deployed to war zones have received a great deal of attention by both policymakers and the news media. A recent article in the Time magazine describes the mental health problems of servicemen and women returning from war zones. Military service has been linked to greater take-up of disability benefits among some veterans, as well as higher rates of crime and violence. This study identified dearth of research on mental health of military personnel, as well as the psychological determinants. It was based on this among other reasons that the study was carried out. Findings made informed the following recommendations;

Firstly, it was found that certain personality traits had significant



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positive relationship with mental health among military personnel. Increase in personality traits such as extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness, leads to higher mental health. Serving in the military, especially in Nigeria requires an extra exhibition of citizenship behaviour, which could only be ascertained by an healthy soldier, psychologically. It is therefore recommended that profiles of military intake be made on their personality and possibly recruited and placed according to their personality traits. An individual with increased level of extroversion could be given upper hand in selection than someone low in extroversion.

It is also recommended from this study that more studies be carried out on other psychological factors that could influence the mental health of military personnel in Nigeria. This will go a long way in ensuring that military personnel are in the right state of mind while serving their father land.

One limitation of this study is the small sample size, which could have an influence on the generalizability. Future studies should endeavor to consider a larger sample size of military personnel, if possible across Nigeria as a country.

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