The Hidden Epidemic: Addressing Substance Misuse in the North-Eastern Combatant Army

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Substance misuse among Nigerian soldiers particularly in the North-East has become a hidden epidemic, that affects health, discipline, and combat readiness. The unique stressors of warfare, repeated deployments, and psychological trauma have intensified reliance on drugs and alcohol as a coping strategy.

Objective: This study investigates the prevalence, causes, and consequences of substance misuse among combatant soldiers operating in the North-eastern Nigeria, focusing on its impact on operational performance and wellbeing.

Method: A mixed-methods strategy was employed. Quantitative data were collected from 150 soldiers across Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe States using Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI). Additionally, 30 soldiers participated in in-depth interviews. Chi-square tests and thematic analysis were used to interpret findings.

Findings: Results revealed institutional weakness in managing substance misuse, inadequate psychological support, and inadequate enforcement of discipline. Substance misuse was linked to impaired judgment, reduced operational performance, indiscipline, and violent incidents. Gaps in rehabilitation infrastructure and inconsistent policy implementation further exacerbated the problem.

Conclusion: Substance misuse poses a serious threat to soldiers' wellbeing and Nigeria's national security. Stronger drug policy enforcement, comprehensive mental health interventions, and educational programs are urgently needed to reduce stigma, promote rehabilitation, and sustain military effectiveness.

Keywords: Combatant Army; Health Effect; Northeast; Operational Performance; Substance Misuse

INTRODUCTION

Psychotropic drugs are those chemicals that, when used, inhaled or injected in the body system, it impacts on the mental process. A drug is typically any substance that causes a change in an organism's physiological or psychological state. Because of this, all psychoactive chemicals are drugs and vice versa. The definition encapsulates a wide range of substances ranging from caffeine, alcohol, cannabis, methamphetamines, to a host of psychedelics ranging from Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) and Dimethyltryptamine (DMT). In recent time, drugs have drawn a negative name since they are heavily abused predominantly those substances which affect the central nervous system (CNS) that is currently a serious issue in Nigeria. As long as drugs possess some indisputable therapeutic uses ranging from curing diseases, relieving pain, to combating infections, their abuse is a serious threat to individuals and society's health at large. Human beings used drugs for healing applications. After a while, some of the properties of drugs have been abused for non-medical purposes. Drug and alcohol consumptions for a very long time remained a military tradition. In most cases soldiers have used substances to suppress pain, fight drowsiness, stimulate vigilance, or alleviate the psycho-emotional stress of warfare ranging from boredom, anxiety, and shock. Military distinctive way of life and

distinctive psycho-social and corporal trials experienced by its active servicemen and veterans on leave partly give rise to a setting in which substances can be abused. Such a setting plays a substantial role in influencing health outcomes, more particularly those relating to mental health and substance abuse.

Within the Nigerian context with protracted socio-economic hardship and national security threats, the military and paramilitaries play a critical role in peacebuilding, domestic stability, and the containment of public health emergencies. However, drug abuse amongst military and paramilitary personnel decreases their efficacy, coherence, and readiness for operations. The consequences of drug abuse are very dreadful in military situations, where stressful conditions, repeated operations, and exposure to conflicts engender weakness to mental illness, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In the past era, democratic governance in Nigeria had contended with worsening security threats including terrorism, insurgency, kidnapping, and banditry. In fighting these threats, Nigerian Army, Navy, Air Force, Police, and Civil Defence Corps have widely mobilised and operated in hotspots of emergencies. Such operations subject military personnels to spectacular form of physical and psychological stress. Majority of soldiers suffer repeated operations, physical traumas, and psychological shock conditions which often drive some officers towards consumption of substances for therapeutic effects.

Alcohol and drug abuse have thus become a serious health and operational problem for the military globally. Heavy drinking is particularly widespread, imbibing extreme health risks and undermining judgment in decision-making, and fighting spirit. Both popular and scientific concern about drug abuse is not a coincidence. It testifies to the size of the problem, which attracted the interest of medical professionals, psychologists, criminologist and sociologists. Numerous scientific articles analyse the health, social, and institutional impacts of substance abuse, especially in a highly disciplined occupation like the army. Drug smuggling within military bases have in recent times continues to be a major threat. In the military barracks because of population density often turn out to be hotspots for distribution and sale of psychotropic and narcotic substances. Drugs that frequently enter military environments by means of enlisted men or civilian affiliates are sold by organized groups of drug vendors. This introduction not only threatens military's health and integrity but also national defence capabilities.

In a serious operational condition, hardly can any soldier withstand stress without resorting to drug usage. During the period of war soldiers in the frontline are more exposed to injury, death threats, with constant anxiety of an ambush, and psychological imbalance. Due to these heighten condition of uncertainty of war mode they frequently comfort themselves through self-medication that often led to drug dependence and further migrated to drug misuse. But unregulated drug misuse often affects the fighting spirit, operational competence that is likely make him more vulnerable to the threats he initially tried to escape from. Substance misuse has a negative multiple effects that affect their personal health, job performance, nation's security structure, and finally a heavy burden to their family. Due to the complexity of the associated problems that accompanied drug this issue needs to be adequately addressed through a broader variety of prevention, intervention and rehabilitation programmes not just for the sake of soldiers' personal wellbeing but also for the maintenance of national security.

Statement of the Problem

Substance abuse in the military set up is a serious embarrassment and a threat to the national security as it influences combat readiness, weakens military discipline and disrupted the hierarchical military structure that are essential for operational effectiveness. Furthermore, it has threatened the lives of many brave men and women who served their country with commitment and courage. The Nigerian Army has paid heavily for this growing substance misuse. The recent incidents have call for national attention to the seriousness and national embarrassment of substance use disorder among the military personnel. For instance, at the Forward Operations Base in Rabbah, 8 Division, a tragic incident happened a soldier, while acting under the influence of substance, shot a fellow soldier before taking his own personal life. The Board of Enquiry while reviewing this case, the initial reports link the incidence to the use of drugs. Other events that occurred on November 22, 2022, where Brigadier-General Audu Ogbole James, the Director of Finance in the Nigerian Army, was killed in Lagos by Corporal Abayomi Ebun, who was driving under the influence of alcohol.

These episodes pinpoint the dangerous trends of drug and alcoholic abuse in our military set up. Firstly, substance misuse significantly affects personal safety, because in the frontline operation it can delayed reaction times, weakened coordination, poor sense of judgment, that is critical to make decision between life and death during operations. There is every tendency that soldiers under the influence of substance are more likely to be injured, making critical errors, or become separated from the unit during tactical redrawer. Secondly, fellow soldiers are placed at a serious risk. In the military organization, unit cohesion and mutual reliance are integral part of combat operation. A minute delay or mistake in judgment due to substance use can expose not only the user's safety but also that of their comrades to a dangerous situation. Trust, which is essential for effective team work in a field operation, can be easily eroded when substance abuse take its toll on the soldiers. Thirdly, drug and alcohol misuse disrupt command structure, group cohesion, morale of the military units. Effective military operations are conditioned on discipline, obedience, and a clear chain of command. Drug induced behaviour frequently leads to conflict, insubordination, or erratic behaviour during field operation, all these usually compromise mission success and endanger combat lives.

Moreso, large number of soldiers on the combat zone are severely affected by drug use, in most cases without access to adequate or timely attention. This ugly scenario often compromises their operational effectiveness that threatens their own lives and those of their comrades. Despite these challenges, there is absence of a comprehensive and detailed research that specifically paid adequate attention on the Nigerian military specifically the Army that examine the extent and the implications of substance misuse on the military performance and their overall wellbeing. Therefore, this work, is here to address this critical gap by promoting for adequate intervention, and to establish a floodgate for future research that addresses substance abuse in the Nigerian Army.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The foremost aim of the research exercise is to assess the pervasiveness and consequences of drug dependence among the Nigerian soldiers. The obvious objectives are to:

1) Examine the impact of drug abuse on soldiers' routine activities

2) Understand the effects of drug use on their training

3) Interrogate the effect of drug misuse on commitment to their military responsibilities

4) Explore the consequence of drug on battlefield and in a specialized operation

5) Examine the existing and the functionality of drug treatment services in the Nigerian Army.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding Substance Abuse in the Military

Substance abuse can impact negatively on the military personnel if consumed as it affects their mental health and role performance. It is a complex problem due to the high-stress conditions and rigorous demands that is associated with military engagement. Usually, soldiers indulge in substance intake as a coping strategy of stressors like deployment, combat exposure, long time distance away from family, and the organization demand. Due to the negative stigma attached with it make it difficult for majority of soldiers to seek help, and thereby worsen their health conditions. It is important to have a clear view or deeper knowledge of the underline's factors responsible for military involvement of drug intake before addressing it. It is a fact that drug intake not only affects individual abilities, but it threatened group solidarity and negatively affect the success of operation in battlefield (Educational Team**,** 2024).

During the ancient Greece alcohol was a common drink for soldiers. It is used for group solidarity and during celebration. It was a daily routine to provide wines for soldiers in the barracks, a tradition they maintained during the colonization era of Roman empire. Alcohol was also part of Germanic lifestyle as Vikings uses ale

and mead, drinks at this period reflect a cultural status of consumers. When rum emerged as another form of drink it played a prominent role during the American War of Independence. One observer explained that rum facilitated to sustain morale and unity of the American armies during the war era (Andreas, 2019). Historical explanation of alcohol explains their cultural relevance and also emphasizes their influence on social and military dynamics throughout the ages.

Alcohol serves a dual purpose for the military organization. It serves as a means for comfort, coping with stress that accompanied military job, and a source of disorder during the early Greeks and Roman empire up to the era of occupation. The widespread use of alcohol was demonstrated during the World War 1, among the soldiers in the battle zone. The British government applied a stringent alcoholic restriction on its production and consumption among the soldier. Taxes on alcoholic were increased despite this increase the British soldiers at the battle field continue to receive their daily supplies in the face of the restriction. It was viewed as indispensable for easing fatigue, stress, and the harsh realities of the battle field (Andreas, 2019). Meanwhile, veterans maintained that without the rum quota, victory might have been impossible during this war. The introduction of advanced weaponry and industrialized methods of warfare overwhelmed both the landscape and its inhabitants that make World War I more unique from other previous battles. It was a war defined by industrialized weapon and the wide spread of industrialized drug usage that includes alcohol (Michael, 2020). Alcohol specifically played a substantial role in facilitating carnages committed by Third Reich. Such acts of extreme cruelty were not common in the context of war before then. Alcohol was used as a means to desensitize the Reserve Police Battalion 101 of about 500 men of their brutal nature of their tasks of mass murder of thousands of innocent civilian men, women, and children in occupied Poland. The report of their first murders in Poland, it was revealed that when they return to the barracks Biłgoraj, they were depressed, physically traumatised, angry, and shaken. They consumed large quantity of alcohol and ate very little. In order to upsetting their moral discomfort and to guarantee continued participation in the violence against people alcohol were deliberated made available for them (Browning, 1993). Every substance or intoxicant drugs has in some context played a significant role in changing an individual into a cruel animal. It was reported that Yanomami people of the Amazon use hallucinogens before they engage in a battle. More so, the ancient Scythians used cannabis for its psychotropic effects, and a neighbouring tribe consumed a substance known as “hauma,” believed to induce a heightened state of aggression (Ehrenreich, 1997). Therefore, all these examples suggest that if a destructive instinct exists in human nature, it is not inherently dominant and usually requires significant external stimulus such as psychoactive substances to be fully activated.

The nature of war actually inspires conditions that encourage the consumption of drug. As earlier noted, human determination to escape from psychological and emotional agony is intensified during the times of war, and drugs often serve as a means of coping means. However, as soldiers continue to use drug on the battlefield, the habit persist even after they return to civilian life. The historical perspective on substance gives us a clearer opportunity to be more informed and less judgmental, and we are likely to be free from baseless assumptions and current biases when we have a clear picture of historical narrative of drug abuse. Because of the shame associated to indiscriminate use of drug it discourages soldiers who are in need from accessing support. Therefore, by having a deeper knowledge of substance abuse we are likely to acknowledge the psychological impression of warfare on soldiers, and have a greater sympathy not only for veterans, but for all those individuals struggling with substance abuse disorders (Mich1ael, 2020).

Causes of Substance Abuse in the Army

Globally and throughout historical epoch alcohol has long played a prominent position in military organization. Because of the intense stress attached with the military job especially deployment, combat and also the psychological aftermath of war experience the military involve in alcoholic intake as a means of coping strategy (Jones & Fear, 2011). More so, due to normalization of alcoholic usage, it often exceeds the levels found among the civilian population (London et al., 2020). Therefore, the nature of the military activities is responsible for shaping perceptions of acceptable drinking behaviour. Normalization of alcohol in both the military and civilian populations is responsible for the reinforcement that perpetuate heavier alcoholic consumption (Irizar et al., 2020). In accordance with the Motivational Model of Alcoholic Use, individuals may indulge in drinking alcohol not just for pleasure, but as a means of managing their emotional state of mind

(Cooper et al., 1995, as cited in Osborne et al., 2023). These reasons are particularly relevant among active-duty military personnel and veterans, who often claim of using alcohol to cope with tension and trauma (Irizar et al., 2020). Alcohol can partially offer emotional and social support like encouraging a sense of relief, but its abuse can cause serious problems to its user.

In the military cycle, where personnel are frequently exposed to high level of pressure environments, the normalization of heavy drinking for recreation or stress relief can lead to long-term dependence and health consequences (Irizar et al., 2020). Studies have demonstrated the connection between deployment experiences with increased risk of problematic alcohol use, suggesting that alcoholic consumption often becomes self-medicating tool in the face of trauma (Besse, Hunt & Lenk, 2018).

Interestingly, data gathered from 2018 highlight the magnitude of drug abuse among the military personnel. Meanwhile, the data shows that more than one-third of soldiers reported drinking alcohol within the previous month, and 10% of these men met the criteria for heavy drinking. Also, the misuse of prescription drugs was equally discovered by 10% of military personnel which is higher than the 1.8% reported among the civilian population. Among the reason that accounted for these patterns is chronic stress of deployment in hostile or war-torn environment. Additionally, long period of separation from home, isolation, physical exhaustion, and harsh realities of war were all responsible for the increased vulnerability to substance misuse. Aside stress of deployment, the rigidity of military culture of discipline, and the shame attached to drug addiction create a strong barrier to seeking assistance. The consequence of drug abuse on the career progression attached to the fear of repercussions usually prevents servicemen from accessing the needed support (Olivier, 2024). The return of veteran to civilian life can be equally tense. The combat experience, unresolved trauma, and chronic pain can further drive some of them toward substance abuse in a form of self-medication. The impact of mental health challenges especially PTSD and substance abuse are widespread among this population. Notwithstanding these health risks, the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence has equally reported that veterans tend to use illicit drugs like cannabis, cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine at lower rates than the general public (Olivier, 2024).

Impact of Drug Misuse on the Army

High demand of military occupation during operation often exposes the army personnel to life-threatening stress, risky duties, and dangerous conditions expose them to substance addiction. These occupational demands increase the tendency of developing mental health challenges that make them to engaging in drug intake. Additionally, recreational use of drugs has the propensity to change emotion, perception and behaviour in different ways. This particular issue is disturbing among the Nigerian soldiers due to the increasing rate of recreational drug use has raised serious concerns. So many research works have demonstrated a strong connection between drug misuse and indiscipline, inter-agency skirmishes, and unintentional discharges of rifles. This incidence is the effects of substance abuse disorder on unfortunate decision taking, emotional regulation, and aggressive behaviour. Because of this, operational unity and safety within the ranks are compromised.

Drug abuse is the indiscriminate use of alcohol, prescription medicines, and illegal drugs by the soldiers in the active military duty. The use of substance has a numerous effect that goes beyond the soldier and the organizational. In military activities drug misuse hampers on battle enthusiasm, as it weakens teamwork, and negatively affect the physical and mental abilities needed for effective discharge of duty (Editorial Team, 2024). Drug misuse in the military sometimes is connected to inadequate decision taking which lead to inability to respond to danger immediately that can put not only the individual soldier who is under the influence of drug but also the entire operational unit put into danger. The effects of this can be dangerous on the individual. Indiscipline caused because of substance intake can attract disciplinary measures like, demotion, dismissal from the active service which is often accompanied by the loss of financial benefits and difficulty in transitioning into civilian employment. Additionally, legal penalties are also common problems facing substance abusers, from arrests to long-term convictions, each of which carries its own burden of potential damage to reputations and limit future opportunities. Substance abuse normally disrupts personal relationships asides from the professional and legal consequences. Inconsistent behaviour, emotional

instability, and poor communication, are the aftermath effects of drug intake which in most cases has led to domestic conflict, and strained family ties. These fallout in social relationship can lead to social isolation, which may lead to further substance use in a damaging cycle (The-Recover, 2024).

Several research works have demonstrated the negative influence of too much alcoholic drinking with poor mental and physical health challenges (Rona et al., 2010), it makes it difficult to function very well, as it increased the risk of suicidal thoughts (Mash, 2014). Combat operational readiness is frequently compromised, and drinking of alcohol has been recognised as strong evidence in military sexual assault (Namrow & Rock, 2012). More so, the Armed personnel in the UK have warned that too much consumption of alcohol can negatively affect team trust, render soldiers unfit for active duty, and worsen overall mission effectiveness (Alcohol Concern, 2012). Oloyede and Adegboyega (2017) were of the view that drug use among the Nigerian military personnel is frequently connected with disobedience of orders and accidental firearm discharges. This type of behavioural disorder presents serious challenges not only to the individual soldiers, or the effectiveness of military operations but it extends to the safety of the non-combatant population. Substance abuse also compromises decision-making process and increases the likelihood of aggressive behaviour, and it further intensifying the risks both in combat and peacetime operations.

Substance Abuse Policy in the Nigerian Army

Preventive policy on drug abuse has been established by the Nigerian Army to minimize the risks associated with alcoholic and drug consumption among the army personnel. This policy is divided into three regulatory frameworks: first, it aims at preventing substance abuse among the military personnel; second, both new recruits and currently serving personnel are systematically screened; and third, civilian staff who have access to sensitive military operations are monitored (Nigerian Army Health Services Directive, 2021). The policy highlights the relevant of Army's commitment to upholding discipline, safeguarding national security, and ensuring the operational readiness of its forces at any time. Research has demonstrated that drug misuse among military personnel have far-reaching effects on the personnel. However, 23% decline in situational awareness was linked to the policy (WHO, 2022), an increase of (37%) in weapons mishandling incidents (Bakare et al., 2021), and the weakening of unit solidity and confidence (Dandeker et al., 2019). The findings have emphasised the importance of proactive prevention and control method in military establishments.

Legalistically, drug control measures in the Nigerian Army are grounded on three legislative components. The Armed Forces Act of (2004) stipulates the legal support with Section 117 which prescribed dismissal after ascertain the misuse of drug, meanwhile, Section 203 explain immediate court-martial procedure for the alleged offence concerning trafficking of drug. The (2022) Act of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Amendment compliment this that make it compulsory for collaboration and intelligence sharing between the (NDLEA) and the military organization. The Act also makes provisions for joint military operation aiming at distribution of narcotics network operating within the army. The military anti-drug control is equally presented in the Nigerian Army Administrative Policy Circular 87/2020, that make it obligatory for monthly random routine of drug testing for at least 10% of personnel it also introduces rehabilitative care for first-time offenders. Yet, retaining them after rehabilitation is very difficult. The methods offer a trail for recovery while emphasising accountability.

However, the implementation of this policy is organized into three testing procedures:

1. Pre-enlistment: Every new entrant must undergo a compulsory five-panel urine testing for drug.

2. Active-duty personnel: Annual drug testing is obligatory, with extensive screening procedures which also applied to members of elite or special operations units.

3. Post-deployment: It is compulsory for every personnel returning from combat operation to undergo testing within 30 days, this is done in accordance with the PTSD Protocol (2021), to screen for possible drug use that often related to traumatic exposure to combat experience.

Several challenges have affected full policy implementation of all these laid-down procedures. Critical gaps have been identified as a reason for achieving these laid down procedures which include the followings:

i. Unequal adherence to screening procedures, especially at forward operating bases.

ii. Insufficient rehabilitation infrastructure, with only two specialized treatment centres nationwide.

iii. There is a big gap that exists in drug discovery, especially with synthetic opioids that is not currently included in standard testing panels (Nigerian Army Medical Corps, 2023).

Coincidentally, the regulatory framework of the Nigerian Army on substance use is in compliance with the military best practice on drug use globally. This is a clear reflection of the Nigerian military determination to address substance abuse among the military personnel. The implementation of these frameworks remains a persistent challenge to date. Addressing these challenges is crucial for guaranteeing the enduring health benefit, discipline, and the effectiveness of the Nigerian military organization.

Theoretical Framework

Transactional Model of Occupational Stress and Coping

The military services is naturally designed in a way that a separate set of stressors emerge which makes it differ from those found among the non-combatant occupations. Due to these differences between military and noncombatant occupations Lazarus and Folkman (1984), have advanced the Transactional Model of Occupational Stress and Coping. They provide a clear understanding of how occupational stress can disturbs health and organizational performance. This model is largely useful in addressing drug abuse disorder that becomes part of the military occupation. The theory assumed that individuals respond to potentially stressful events through a two-step cognitive process. First is the situation where an individual evaluates whether the situation poses a significance threat to their survival. If the situation is perceived as demanding or threatening, the individual move to the secondary appraisal, at this stage they assess their ability and available means of coping with the perceived challenges. At the end of the appraisals, these individuals will adopt a coping strategy either problem-focused or emotion-focused that will enable them to manage the stress. The success of these strategies actually depends on how the body and mind respond to the stressor.

Large number of job-related stressors in the military organization such as, difficult workloads, lack of control, extended work hours, shift work, prolong distance from home, and challenging supervision are more than those found in civilian jobs. The military occupation is surrounded with a unique and a high-risk task. These involve the present of possibility of physical harm, combat exposure, and even death. These types of extreme stressors shape both the perception of threat and the choice of coping measures. Given the degree and nature of these stressors, it's certain to conclude that military personnel may likely engage in a different means of coping strategy. The only available means of managing occupational stress is the continue dependence on substance. Drug or alcoholic consumption serve as a strategy to curtail the psychological burden that emanates from military task which may eventually have a negative consequence on their health and also undermine the military effectiveness in managing the security crisis in the country.

Research Design and Methods of Data Collection

Mixed-methods of data collection was adopted in this research in order to employ the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches that would provide a complete understanding of the statement of research problem. By utilizing Quantitative method, structured questionnaires were administered using Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). This tool comprised of both closed- and open-ended questionnaires to collect relevant information related to the use of drug, mental health, and operational stress in the military setup. Nevertheless, using CAPI it ensured data accuracy, real-time capture, and enhanced confidentiality. Data collection using qualitative method, i.e., In-depth structured interviews were conducted by purposively selecting 30 medical corps soldiers (10 per state in three northeastern states, namely, Borno,

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Adamawa, and Yobe states). The participants' consent was obtained before interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed for further analysis.

Data Analysis

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was utilized to analysed data obtained through CAPI. The application of inferential statistics such as chi-square tests were used to examine the relationships between the key variable and frequency distributions and percentages were also applied. Transcriptions were coded manually and categorized into evolving themes and sub-themes to study the patterns, perspectives, and contradictions within the data.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Gender	Male	123	82.0%
	Female	27	18.0%
	Total	**150**	**100%**
Age	18–22	33	22.0%
	23–27	25	16.7%
	28–32	13	8.7%
	33–37	46	30.7%
	38–42	8	5.3%
	43–47	7	4.7%
	48–52	15	10.0%
	53–57	3	2.0%
	Total	**150**	**100%**
Marital Status	Single	59	39.3%
	Married	88	58.7%
	Divorced	1	0.7%
	Widower	2	1.3%
	Total	**150**	**100%**
Rank	Pte–Cpl	110	73.3%
	Sgt–WTO	36	24.0%
	Lt–Capt.	4	2.7%
	Total	**150**	**100%**

Years in Service	<1 Year	14	9.3%
	1–5 Years	43	28.7%
	6–10 Years	16	10.7%
	11–15 Years	48	32.0%
	16–20 Years	9	6.0%
	21–25 Years	7	4.7%
	26–30 Years	12	8.0%
	31+ Years	1	0.7%
	Total	**150**	**100%**
Education	WAEC/SSCE	106	70.7%
	Diploma/NCE	25	16.7%
	BSc/HND/B.Ed	17	11.3%
	M.Sc/PhD	2	1.3%
	Total	**150**	**100%**
Religion	Christianity	88	58.7%
	Islam	61	40.7%
	Others	1	0.7%
	Total	**150**	**100%**

Field Survey: 2025

The above table 1, shows the demographic attributes of respondents. It reveals the composition of factors that encourages drug intakes among the soldiers. The data shows that (82%) of respondents are male, and only (18%) are female. This data shows the historical male dominated structure of combatant units over the minority female population. It is a fact that globally frontline soldiers are mostly dominated by male.

The age distribution of respondents of the above table shows that the largest percentage of respondents (30.7%) falls within the age range of 33-37, followed by (22%) aged between 18–22. These findings suggest a mixture of youthful recruits and mid-career service members. However, younger soldiers are more likely to be more vulnerable due to peer group influence, risk-taking behaviour, and experimentation with substances that is usually a trait among these young age group. Additionally, older personnel are more likely to be overwhelmed by cumulative exposure to traumatic experience, leadership responsibilities, and psychological fatigue, all of which can contribute to inadequate adaptation strategies such as substance abuse.

The marital status of the respondents shows that (58.7%) of respondents are married, while 41.3% of respondents are either single, divorced or widowed. The large number of married soldiers shows that a significant number of service personnel must respond to the family responsibilities and also cope with the demands of military life. Therefore, the prolonged separation from loved ones, coupled with emotional strain,

can heighten stress levels and contribute to substance use disorder as a form of escape route from this isolation from the loved ones. Additionally, it is expected that family commitments may shape the availability and strength of informal support systems, with implications for mental resilience and recovery. But for those who are singles are not likely to have informal support system.

Rank in the military hierarchy is expected to plays a vital role in shaping both exposures to stress and access to coping means. This shows that (73.3%) of the soldiers belong to junior ranks, this group are disproportionately deployed to frontline operations. These group of soldiers often face high level of stress in their daily routine but lack the institutional support and autonomy that is essential to ease their stress but are made available to the higher-ranking officers. Their lower rank has limited their access to mental health resources and leadership influence makes them especially vulnerable to risky behaviours, including drug use.

Looking at the year of service, (32%) of soldiers has served between 11-15 years, placing them at a crucial point in their military careers. Followed by (28.7%) who has served between 1-5 years. It is expected that long period of service often corresponds with prolonged exposure to combat zones that is associated with military job. Because of prolong period of accumulation of psychological stress, and physical wear-and-tear, all of these can heighten exposure to substance dependence if left unattended.

Educational status of the respondents also compounds the respondents' vulnerability to drug abuse. However, large number of these population (70.7%) have attained only secondary school level of education. Followed by (16.7%) of those who had either Diploma/NCE. Thus, the large number of these groups not only suggesting a lower ranking status but also suggesting limited awareness of the health, legal, and operational implications of drug abuse. Lower educational levels can affect critical thinking to understand the consequence and the risk associated with drug intake. It can also affect the understanding and involvement of drug prevention information. Therefore, understanding the literacy level is important for the development of treatment programs directed to this group of soldiers based on their cognitive ability.

Religious status of respondents indicates that (58.7%) of the respondents are Christian, while that of Muslim is (40.7%). The fact that the two religions condemn drug abuse it is not a reliable predictor of abstinence of drug intake alone. Even though engaging religious leader through preaching against drug abuse and other institutional mechanism can help in reducing the menace of drug abuse in the army.

Table 2: Distribution of Drug Use among Army Personnel

Substance	**Strongly-Agree**	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly-Disagree**	**Total**
Alcohol	68 (45.3%)	41 (27.3%)	31 (20.7%)	10 (6.7%)	150
Amphetamine	79 (52.7%)	52 (34.7%)	8 (5.3%)	11 (7.3%)	150
Cigarette	81 (54%)	42 (28%)	16 (10.7%)	11 (7.3%)	150
Cocaine	9 (6%)	3 (2%)	45 (30%)	93 (62%)	150
Codeine	85 (56.7%)	49 (32.7%)	8 (5.3%)	8 (5.3%)	150
Heroin	11 (7.3%)	4 (2.7%)	47 (31.3%)	88 (58.7%)	150
Marijuana	85 (56.7%)	44 (29.3%)	10 (6.7%)	11 (7.3%)	150
Tramadol	84 (56%)	45 (30%)	10 (6.7%)	11 (7.3%)	150
Tutolin	85 (56.7%)	46 (30.7%)	13 (8.7%)	6 (4%)	150

Ice	87 (58%)	48 (32%)	10 (6.7%)	5 (3.3%)	150
Vicodin	88 (58.7%)	49 (32.7%)	9 (6%)	4 (2.7%)	150
Mescaline	4 (2.7%)	6 (4%)	52 (34.7)	88 (58.7%)	150
Glues		86 (57.3%)	54 (36%)	6 (4%)	150
Paint Thinners	89 (59.3%)	51 (34%)	5 (3.3%)	5 (3.3%)	150
Ecstasy	92 (61.3%)	47 (31.3%)	6 (4%)	5 (3.3%)	150
Ritalin		89 (59.3%)	50 (33.3%)	6 (4%)	150
Fentanyl	88 (58.7%)	49 (32.7%)	7 (4.7%)	6 (4%)	150
Salvia		4 (2.7%)	7 (4.7%)	48 (32%)	

Field Survey: 2025

The above table 2 identified the wide spread distribution and the use of substances among the military personnel, it covers the 18 different legal and illegal drugs in the table. This indicates not only to the high prevalence rate of substance use among the armed forces, but it also indicates the different motivational usage behind it. Ranging from coping with trauma and stress but also to enhance performance and managing emotional distress. The findings pointed to the fact that this is not an isolated phenomenon but rather a systemic crisis, driven by a combination of institutional neglect, cultural normalization of drug use, psychological burden, and the ineffective regulation and enforcement mechanisms within the military setting. The most commonly used substances are Cigarettes (82%) and Alcohol (72.6%) they are both easily accessible and socially accepted as normal, they are often perceived as part of military social life. While legal, their constant usage can seriously affect military operation and harm the individual and over time and potentially act as gateways to more harmful substances.

More worrisome is the high reported use of drug enhancing performance and the emotionally distressing drugs. For instance, Ritalin (92.6%), Ecstasy (92.6%), and Amphetamines (87.4%). All these figures pointed to an underlying culture of over usage of action induced drugs, where soldiers turn to stimulants to stay active, suppress fatigue, or manage emotional distress, possibly due to unaddressed psychological needs and unrealistic demand of operational expectations. Additionally, opioid misuse appears rampant with Codeine (89.4%), Tutolin (87.4%), and Tramadol (86%). Incidentally, majority of these drugs are mostly used for self-medication for chronic pain, sleeplessness and nervousness that are common among the frontliners. Heavy reliance on these medications point to the fact that there is shortfall in medical profession, and psychological support that motivates soldiers for self-medication of unregulated use of drugs.

A high usage of potent and addictive drugs was revealed in the data. For instance, both Vicodin Fentanyl shows (91.4%) each, and Crystal Meth (90%). The facts that these drugs are found within the military environment is worrisome as it shows that there is a gap in the regulation and monitoring of drugs in general. Additionally, there is a high usage of inhalants drugs like Glue and Paint Thinners (93.3%) each. There high usage may be connected to high accessibility and cheaper cost. Cocaine (8%), Heroin (10%), Mescaline (6.7%), and Salvia (7.4%) are both relatively very low in their usage. The low usage of these drugs is likely due to the cost, proper monitoring, and inadequate access. The fact that they found are raises red flags regarding lapses in disciplinary action, potential trafficking routes, and failures in military control measures.

Generally, the findings paint a complex and deeply rooted interplay of substance use crisis within the Nigerian military. This crisis is further aggravated by operational stress, unaddressed mental health conditions, entrenched cultural norms around drug use, and significant regulatory weaknesses. The urgency required to address this scenario cannot be overestimated. What is needed is a comprehensive package of multi-pronged

approaches, that includes expanded mental health services, educational campaigns, strict pharmaceutical control, and culturally adapted prevention strategies to stem the tide of this escalating drug usage.

Table 3: Drug Availability among Army Personnel

Substance	HighlyAvailable	Very Available	HighlyNot Available	Not Available	Total
Alcohol	92 (61.3%)	50 (33.3%)	3 (2%)	5 (3.3%)	150
Amphetamine	75 (50%)	43 (28.7%)	17 (11.3%)	15 (10%)	150
Cigarette	57 (38%)	35 (23.3%)	25 (16.7%)	33 (22%)	150
Cocaine	9 (6%)	19 (12.7%)	48 (32%)	74 (49.3%)	150
Codeine	68 (45.3%)	39 (26%)	23 (15.3%)	20 (13.3%)	150
Heroin	8 (5.3%)	23 (15.3%)	44 (29.3%)	75 (50%)	150
Marijuana	71 (47.3%)	32 (21.3%)	20 (13.3%)	27 (18%)	150
Tramadol	66 (44%)	36 (24%)	31 (20.7%)	17 (11.3%)	150
Tutolin	63 (42%)	38 (25.3%)	31 (20.7%)	18 (12%)	150
Ice	74 (49.3%)	37 (24.7%)	27 (18%)	12 (8%)	150
Vicodin	81 (54%)	39 (26%)	22 (14.7%)	8 (5.3%)	150
Mescaline	9 (6%)	17 (11.3%)	41 (27.3%)	83 (55.3%)	150
Glues	79 (52.7%)	21 (14%)	39 (26%)	11 (7.3%)	150
Paint Thinners	76 (50.7%)	41 (27.3%)	23 (15.3%)	10 (6.7%)	150
Ecstasy	82 (54.7%)	16 (10.7%)	42 (28%)	10 (6.7%)	150
Ritalin	81 (54%)	44 (29.3%)	17 (11.3%)	8 (5.3%)	150
Fentanyl	81 (54%)	43 (28.7%)	18 (12%)	8 (5.3%)	150
Salvia	10 (6.7%)	15 (10%)	42 (28%)	83 (55.3%)	150

Field Survey: 2025

The table above indicate the high availability of Alcohol (94.6%), which indicate lack of regulation and the general acceptability of its consumption. However, Amphetamines (78.7%), Tramadol (68%), Codeine (71.3%), and Tutolin (67.3%) indicates easy availability despite that they are regulated drugs. The findings show inadequate control and monitoring of these drugs. Cigarettes (61.3%) and Marijuana (68.6%) are both widely available. Its accessibility and availability may be connected to societal changing attitudes, and cultivation for industrial usage. It is a common thing to see its usage within the military barracks.

Additionally, the data also show the high availability of Crystal Meth (Ice, 74%), Ritalin (83.3%), Fentanyl (82.7%), Vicodin (80%), Ecstasy (65.4%), Glue (66.7%) and Paint Thinners (78%). Most of these drugs are dangerous and addictive in nature that equally point to its high consumption rate. All these raises a serious fundamental concern about these drugs within our military formation. There availability shows a serious gap

on drug monitoring and control within the military environment especially those in the barracks, road and in the frontline.

However, drugs such as, Cocaine (18.7%), Heroin (20.6%), Mescaline (6%), and Salvia (10%) are relatively low availability and consumption. Despite a limited availability of these drugs is a concern in monitoring and control of these drugs.

Table 4: Reasons for Drug Abuse among Army Personnel

Reason for Drug Use	**Strongly Agree (%)**	**Agree (%)**	**Disagree (%)**	**Strongly Disagree (%)**	**Valid Percent (%)**
To relieve the stress of daily activities	40.0	34.7	14.0	11.3	100.0
To enhance my mental alertness	48.7	32.0	13.3	6.0	100.0
To improve my performance	47.3	31.3	14.7	6.7	100.0
Drug usage can aid in evading depression and ongoing anxiety	48.7	22.7	15.3	13.3	100.0
Personnel are more likely in taking drugs to enhance performance outcome	51.3	30.0	14.0	4.7	100.0
Drug use aids in the swift recovery after difficult exercises	52.7	29.3	11.3	6.7	100.0
Without drugs, I tend to experience discomfort	60.0	26.0	8.7	5.3	100.0
To avoid exhaustion while on duty	56.7	30.0	8.0	5.3	100.0
To fill the void created by separation from loved ones	56.7	28.7	8.0	6.7	100.0
To evade frustration experienced in the line of duty	58.0	28.7	6.7	6.7	100.0
To increase my agility	55.3	30.7	8.0	6.0	100.0
To feel good	56.7	24.7	10.7	8.0	100.0

Field Survey: 2025

The above table 4, indicate the reason responsible for drug consumption among the military personnel. Relief of stress (74.7%), Mental alertness (80.7%) and operational and emotional dexterity (78.6% and 71.4%, respectively). Substances consumption for physical recovery (52.7%) and to avoid exhaustion (56.7%), These results attest to the chronic stress that is common in the military occupation. Over (85%) of the population attribute it to psychological stressors like frustration and separation from family as key drivers of drug use. More so, motivators like feeling good (55.3%) and enhanced agility (56.7%), suggest that recreational use of drugs for performance-enhancing behaviours also influence the use of substance.

In conclusion, the data spotlight multidimensional factors as a causal factor of substance consumption. Therefore, it is not an individual choice, but a condition rooted in the military occupation, psychological, and social issues. Substance usage among soldiers is being facilitated by a combination of factors i.e.,

psychological agony, lengthen detachment from families, performance demands, cultural pressures, and institutional shortcomings.

Table 5: Consequences of Drug Misuse on Job Performance

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total (%)
Have been punished for lateness due to drug usage	12.0	16.0	24.0	48.0	100.0
Substance hampers routine military exercise	12.7	16.0	24.7	46.7	100.0
Feeling of discomfort after drug use	49.3	23.3	16.0	11.3	100.0
Abandoning duties because of drug usage	14.0	14.0	26.0	46.0	100.0
Job challenges after drug use	14.0	12.7	24.7	48.7	100.0
Inability to meet tasks demand	12.7	14.7	23.3	49.3	100.0
Not promotion because of drug	14.0	14.0	23.3	48.7	100.0
Impacts of drugs on mood & task completion	14.0	16.7	24.0	45.3	100.0
Cannot pay attention doing work without drugs	10.0	10.0	26.7	53.3	100.0
Overacting affecting affairs with colleagues due to drug use	12.7	16.7	27.3	43.3	100.0

Field Survey: 2025

The above Table 5 highlight the negative use of substance abuse. Majority of soldiers (72%) are of the views that drug usage affects punctuality and discipline which is an important aspect of military occupation. Meanwhile, (71.4%) of soldiers admit a deterioration in job performance because of drug, while (49.3%) denied any physical discomfort, this result signify disconnection between perceived cognitive decline and physical symptoms. Another disturbing trend is the (72%) of soldiers who admit the feeling of tempted to neglect their duties, and (73.4%) that are unable to complete their assignment with the specified schedules. Almost half of the population (49.3%) agreed of failing assignments, and (48.7%) of soldiers in the sampled population admit that drug use has a setback in their promotion. This shows that the use of substance not only health, behaviour but a strong barrier to career progression. More disturbing is the (53.3%) of the sampled population that depend on drugs to maintain focus, this indicates occupational functional dependence on drug. More than (45%) of sampled population report mood swings, indicating that drug-induced psychological instability further erodes their capacity to function effectively, interact professionally, or lead others successfully.

Table 6: Impact of Drug Use on Health of Military Personnel

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Total (%)
Anxiety, poor eyesight and Joint pain.	26.0	35.3	16.0	22.7	100.0

Struggle to breath and heart failure.	26.7	36.7	17.3	19.3	100.0
Poor mindset, and disregard for duty are the outcome of drugs use	29.3	36.7	12.7	21.3	100.0
Ignoring duties after drug use	26.0	35.3	17.3	21.3	100.0
Drug use causes family issue	25.3	36.0	14.7	24.0	100.0
Mental illness and job termination	32.7	35.3	11.3	20.7	100.0

Field Survey: 2025

The above Table 6 display the influence of substance abuse on the health of military personnel. More than (61%) of sampled population of soldiers in the northeast associate drug use with physical symptoms like joint pain, nervousness, and poor sight. This result indicates a serious danger as the health of these personnel deterioration that will definitely affect combat readiness, reduce endurance, and reduce the lifespan soldier's careers progression due to chronic illness or been discharge early from service on health ground. More so, (63%) of soldiers indicated heart challenges, like heart failure and difficulties in breathing. These conditions signal medical challenges, that can affect the soldiers in the frontline.

The influence of substance abuse on soldiers' behaviour and responsibility is threatening. Almost (66%) of the respondents acknowledge to erratic behaviour, while (61.3%) of soldiers overlooking assignments and not less than (61.3%) are of the view that substance intake can disrupt family relationship. Additionally, (68%) of the soldiers admit the consequence of substance use on mental wellbeing and occupational security. These findings entirely point to the negative effects of drug abuse both on the health, job security, combat readiness unit cohesion, and family relationship. Despite these acknowledgements they become more addicted to it. Which points to the fact that they need medical and social assistance to get rid of this addiction.

Hypothesis Testing and Interpretation

At this stage relationship between drug availability and consumption are examine to determine their level of association using chi-square analysis.

Hypothesis 1:

a. Null Hypothesis (H_0): The availability of drugs influences consumption.

b. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): The availability of drugs does not influence consumption.

Results Summary: Availability of Drug and Consumption

Substance	**Chi-Square Statistic**	**p-value**	**Significance**
Alcohol	29.22	2.02×10^{-6}	Significant
Amphetamine	4.81	0.186	Not Significant
Marijuana	13.22	0.0042	Significant
Tramadol	15.20	0.0017	Significant
Codeine	15.43	0.0015	Significant

Tutolin	17.40	0.0006	Significant

Interpretation:

The outcome of the test shows there is significant statistical relationship availability of drugs and consumption rate. For instance, Availability of Drugs and Consumption especially alcohol, marijuana, opioids (Tramadol, Codeine, Tutolin) indicate that easy access is a significance factor for its usage. Inadequate significance for amphetamines implies that their use may be shaped more by psychological, cultural, or performance-related pressures rather than availability alone.

Hypothesis 2

a. Null Hypothesis (H_0): The consequences of drug misuse on job performance impact the health of military personnel.

b. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): The consequences of drug misuse on job performance have no impact on the health of military personnel.

Results Summary: Job Performance Consequences vs. Health Impacts

Indicator of Job Performance	Health Outcome	Chi-Square Statistic	p-value	Significance
Reprimanded/warned for lateness due to drug intake	Nervousness, poor eyesight and joint pain.	11.99	0.0074	Significant
Drug use hindered performance exercise during training	Difficulty in breathing and Heart failure	9.21	0.027	Significant
Physical discomfort linked to drug use	Erratic behaviour and disregard for duty	30.34	1.17×10^{-6}	Highly Significant
Considering abandoning role due to drug use	Ignoring assignments under drug influence	8.82	0.032	Significant
Difficulty with tasks due to drug effects	Substance use triggers family issues	12.28	0.0065	Significant
Inability to fulfil task from superior officers	Psychological illness and loss of job	8.18	0.042	Significant

Interpretation:

The result from the tested hypothesis between the two variables indicated a statistically significant relationships, showing that substance abuse has both occupational and health challenges. It shows that physical discomfort and erratic behaviour are strongly related. It also confirms that drug use erodes military discipline and poor judgment. Other relationships indicate how drug-related performance risk often extend into mental health challenges, family instability, and the risk of job loss.

The results actually confirm the hypotheses, by showing that:

1. Drug availability actually influences the consumption rate, especially drugs like alcohol and opioids.

2. Drug misuse affects work performance especially as it has negative effects on health outcomes from physical deterioration to mental distress down to family disorganization.,

Summary of Findings

The study is an examination of substance misuse in the north-eastern combatant as a hidden epidemic that is affecting the soldiers in the frontline. There is a complex interplay of the causes of drug intake among the Nigerian soldiers with its multiple effects it has not only on the soldier's wellbeing, but it affects the group cohesion, their family, career progression etc. Using a mixed methods for the study the research uncovers the pattern of drug abuse and the main causes of drug abuse. Key findings are:

a) Factors that Influence Drug Intake: Emotional relief, stress management, enhance performance and recreational use were discovered to be the chief drivers of drug use among the frontline soldiers in the north-east.

b) Effects on Job Performance: Substance abuse reduced job; it affects career progression and thereby induced disciplinary major.

c) Consequences of Drug Consumption on Health: The results shows that joint pain, cardiovascular issues, and erratic behaviour, drug dependency were common among the military population in the north-east.

CONCLUSION

The major reasons accounting for substance misuse are trauma, separation, and burdens for job performance, worsened by a lack of support system and the nature of military culture. Drug abuse has a wider influence on a larger population than those individuals who misused drugs, it affects group relations, endangering mission success, and tarnishing the reputation of the institution. In addressing the central issue, there is no single-dimensional response to it. Solution must include endless prevention, intervention and support. If the causes for drug abuse are discovered and actions are initiated with availability of enough resources, reduction and the prevalence of drugs in the military is possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1) **Enhancing Stress Management Resources**:

a. Establish counselling, and stress reduction workshops.

b. Encourage regular recreational programs to ease stress.

2) **Establishing Robust Health Monitoring Systems**:

a. Conduct constant physical and mental health screenings to identify risk personnel.

b. Availability and accessibility of confidential health services for early time intervention.

c. Routine drug testing and monitoring.

d. Improved control of pharmaceutical access.

e. Create an avenue for mental health and trauma counselling care units.

f. Establishment of rehabilitative mental health services in all the military barracks.

3) **Promoting Performance Without Substances**:

a. Training should be design in such a way that it discourages the use of drug for performance enhancement practices.

b. Identify and compensate soldiers that perform excellent through health and hygiene practices.

4) **Developing a Caring Organizational Culture**:

a. Normalise mental health and emotional seeking assistance in the army that discourage stigmatization.

b. Develop and train military leaders to understand healthy coping methods that address drug abuse proactively.

5) **Establishment of Family Integration System**:

a. Design a deployment method that reduce long distance away from the family

b. Establish counselling unit to support families of military personnel on the battlefield.

6) **A Clear Policies and Rehabilitation Programs to be Implemented**:

a. Impose firm compliance with fair policies on substance misuse, that combine accountability and opportunities for rehabilitation.

b. Provide accessibility to rehabilitation programs designed primarily with military lifestyles in focus.

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