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EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE ROLE OF TRAINING ON THE MORALE OF PERSONNEL IN THE NIGERIAN ARMY FOR COUNSELLING PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the correlation between military training and morale of personnel of the Nigerian army for counselling practice. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The design employed for this study is a correlational survey research design. The sample of this study consists of 850 personnel of the Nigerian Army. The instrument for the study is titled "Military Training, Military counselling and Military Personnel 'Morale'. The psychometric properties of the instrument were determined through expert judgment and factor analysis. These tests yielded a general reliability coefficient of 0.96 for the entire scale. All the research questions were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and coefficient of determination while hypotheses were tested using regression. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that: there is a positive significant correlation between training and morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army, there is a positive significant relationship between military training counselling and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army, there is a positive significant correlation between religious beliefs and the morales of personnel of the Nigerian Army. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that government should invest in comprehensive training programs that not only focus on skills development but also prioritize confidence-building and morales.

Keywords: Training, Morale, Nigerian Army.

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Introduction

The Army, the bulk of the Nigerian Armed Forces, is in charge of security, defense, and ground combat activities inside Nigeria. It serves as the primary ground combat force, tasked with safeguarding the territorial integrity of the nation, defending its sovereignty, and protecting its citizens from internal and external threats. The Nigerian Army is actively engaged in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations to combat extremist groups such as Boko Haram and its offshoots in the northeastern region of Nigeria. These operations aim at restoring peace, stability, and order to areas affected by insurgency, protect civilians, and promote development and reconstruction (Hunt, 2022).

One important aspect of the fighting unit in the Nigerian army is morale. The term Morale refers to the overall psychological and emotional condition of individuals or groups, especially in the context of their enthusiasm, confidence, and willingness to perform tasks or face challenges. In this study, morale refers specifically to the mental and emotional state of soldiers or military units, including their sense of purpose, motivation, and unity. High morale among troops is essential for maintaining effectiveness and achieving success in military operations. It influences factors such as discipline, resilience, teamwork, and combat readiness. Soldiers with high morale are more likely to demonstrate dedication, initiative, and courage in the face of adversity. Conversely, low morale can have detrimental effects on military performance, leading to decreased morale (Mabindisa & Legoabe, 2021).

The morale of Nigerian military personnel seems to be on the lower side (Șerban, 2024). Indices from all sides reflect that Nigerian soldiers are weakened by certain factors that demand urgent attention. Nigerian News Direct, (2020) report revealed how recently, no less than 356 soldiers across the country tendered their voluntary retirement to the Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen Tukur Buratai, citing “loss of interest” as their reason for disengagement. The soldiers whose request has been approved expressed their decision in a letter to the Army Chief on July 3, 2020. The fears of the increasing loss of soldiers have been reported to become a source of worry to soldiers at the forefront of the fight against insecurity across the country. An acting Commanding Officer of the Army, Major K. Yakubu, was killed by terrorists during a gun battle in the Doron Naira and Magaji areas of Borno State. The case was one among other demoralizing losses to the Army. 47 soldiers were reportedly killed in March 2020 by a bomb explosion facilitated by the terrorist group in Gorigi near the Allargano Forest area in Borno State.

According to The Premium Times (2022), in the first half of 2022, criminal elements murdered 65 police officers in total. The same period also saw the deaths of at least 92 other security personnel, including two corrections officers, two National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) officers, five Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) officers, two Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) officials, and 81 soldiers. On July 3, 2022, three sources told Reuters (2022) that militants had attacked a mine in the Shiroro region of Niger state earlier that week, killing thirty Nigerian troops in an ambush. The military personnel's poor morale as a result of these deaths is probably going to affect their productivity. Speaking of military morale, Buratai (2016) blamed sabotage and poor officer morale for recent operational defeats in the nation's struggle against instability. This means that determining the cause of poor morale is critical. This study employs empirical data to investigate the impact of training on the low morale of military personnel. Thus, the researcher looked at how military training affected Nigerian military personnel's morale.

Training is a systematic process aimed at improving an individual's skills and knowledge in a particular field or profession. It is designed to provide individuals with the

necessary knowledge and tools to perform their jobs effectively. Training as it relates to military refers to the systematic process of preparing individuals, units, or organizations to fulfill their roles and responsibilities effectively within the armed forces. It encompasses a wide range of activities designed to develop the skills, knowledge, physical fitness, and readiness required for military operations, missions, and tasks.

Training may have a central role in morale. Military training aims to prepare soldiers comprehensively for the rigors of battle. It goes beyond merely teaching skills like shooting and equipment handling; it engages the entire individual, encompassing the mind, body, emotions, character, and spirit, as highlighted by Van 'T Wout and van Dyk (2015). Various elements of military training contribute to this preparation. Drills, for instance, instill confidence by eliminating uncertainty in actions, crucial during the chaos of battle where quick, decisive action is paramount. Marching cultivates uniformity, obedience, physical fitness, and endurance, fostering perseverance even in unfavorable conditions. Additionally, it promotes cohesion, teaching soldiers to move as a unified force. Physical fitness is another critical aspect of military training, enhancing both physical and mental well-being and bolstering resilience against stress. Like marching, physical training often occurs in groups, with synchronized actions in response to instructor commands, aiming for the same goals of unity, obedience, and endurance. In essence, military training encompasses a holistic approach, integrating physical, mental, and emotional facets to equip soldiers with the readiness and resilience needed to excel in combat situations (Șerban, 2024).

Statement of the Problem

Insecurity poses a significant threat to the development of education in Nigeria, affecting basic schools, secondary schools, and higher institutions. Continuous attacks on educational institutions have detrimental effects on school administrators, teachers' job performance, and student learning. The morale of military personnel, tasked with protecting lives, property, and the nation's territorial integrity, appears to be low, potentially hindering their effectiveness. Observations suggest that the increasing loss of soldiers is a significant concern for those on the frontlines of combating insecurity in Nigeria. Several factors may contribute to this low morale; however, the researcher is interested in assessing the impact of training on the moral of the Nigerian Army. The problem of this study, therefore, is, what is the relationship between training and morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised in this study:

1. What is the correlation between training and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army?
2. What is the correlation between military training counselling and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. There is no significant correlation between training and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army?
2. There is no significant correlation between military training counselling and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army?

Research Method

This study adopted the correlation survey research design. The population of this study consists of 223,000 Military personnel of the Nigeria Army. (National Défense College Nigeria 2018). The sample of this study consists of 1000 personnel of the Nigeria Army drawn from the entire population size of 223,000. The rule of thumb suggests that for a population of more than 223, 000 a sample size of 850 is adequate. Simple random techniques and convenience sampling techniques will be used to select the sample size for the study. The instrument that was used for data collection is a questionnaire titled "Military Training, Military counselling and Military Personnel 'Morale'. The questionnaire consists of three rating scales which include the military training Rating scale, Military Counselling Rating Scale, and Military Personnel Morale Rating scale with a total of 40 items. The respondents requested asked to indicate their opinion on four points scale with close-ended items as Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1) points. The instrument was faced validated by three (3) experts in Guidance and Counselling Department, among whom are the research supervisors. These experts assessed the instruments for appropriateness and suitability to the study, and their suggestions were affected. The content and construct validation of the instrument were done using factor analysis. The instrument was administered to 100 Military personnel in Ondo State and the data obtained were subject to factor analysis. The Cronbach Alpha was applied for the computation of the reliability coefficient of the subscales of the instrument. The general reliability coefficient is 0.96, the reliability coefficient values obtained for Military Training Rating Scale is 0.80, Military Personnel Deployment Rating Scale is 0.75, Military Personnel Welfare Rating Scale is 0.73, Military counselling rating scale 0.74, The instruments were administered to respondents in all the military formations as stated in the sampling procedures for the study. The researcher and assistant visited all the Barracks in the selected Military Divisions, Brigades, and Battalions. The research questions were answered using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) and coefficient of determination. On the other hand, the hypotheses were tested using Linear and Multiple linear regressions at a 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between training and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army?

Table 1: *Pearson Product Moment Correlation(r) and Coefficient of Determination (r^2) of* training *and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army*

Variables	N	R	r^2	r^2%	Decision
Training Morale	850	549	301	30.0	positive relationship

Table 1 shows the r-value of 0.549 as the amount of correlation between training and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army. The coefficient of determination (r^2) was 0.301 and the amount of contribution of training to morale was 30.0%. The result showed a positive correlation between training and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between military training, counselling, and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army?

Table 2: *Multiple Correlation and Coefficient of Determination of what is the relationship between military training, counselling, and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army?*

Variables	N	R	r^2	r^2%	Decision
Counselling Training Morale	850	.564	.318	31.8	positive correlation

Table 2 shows the r-value of 0.564 as the amount of relationship among training, counselling, and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army. The coefficient of determination (r^2) was 0.318 and the amount of contribution of deployment to morale was 31.8%. The result showed a positive correlation between training, counselling, and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between training and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army.

Table 3: *Linear Regression Analysis of* training and morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	16486.442	1	16486.42	365.417	.000	
Residual	38258.999	848	45.117			Null hypothesis rejected
Total	54745.441	849				

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 3 reveals a linear regression output of the relationship between training and morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army. The computed F-value of 365.417 and a p-value of 0.000. Testing the null hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of 0.000 was less than the alpha level of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that there was a significant correlation between training and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant correlation between military training, counselling, and morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army.

Table 4: *Multiple Regression Analysis of military training, counselling, and morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army.*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	17384.22	2	8692.11	197.06	.000	
Residual	37361.22	847	44.11			Null hypothesis rejected
Total	54745.44	849				

Table 4 shows the multiple regression output of the correlation between Army training, counselling, and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army. The computed F-value of 197.055 and a p-value of 0.00. Testing the null hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of 0.00 was less than the alpha level of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was a significant correlation between military training, counselling, and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army.

Discussion of Results

The results of the above data presentation were discussed under the following headings:

Relationship Between Training and Morale of Personnel of the Nigerian Army.

Research question one aimed to investigate the correlation between training and the morale of personnel in the Nigerian Army. The analysis revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between these two factors. This indicates that as training levels increase, the morale of military personnel also improves. Military training programs are designed to enhance the skills, knowledge, and capabilities of personnel. People who are trained gain new information and abilities that increase their self-assurance and ability to do their jobs well. Their morale may be raised by this greater feeling of competence, which may result in a more upbeat perspective and attitude towards their work. Military personnel that participate in effective training programs develop a feeling of accomplishment and purpose. Training exercises highlight the importance of their roles within the organization by providing opportunities for both professional and personal development. People will feel more capable and empowered to carry out their duties, which will boost their morale.

Training exercises often involve teamwork and collaboration among military personnel. Engaging in shared challenges and overcoming obstacles together can foster a sense of camaraderie and cohesion within units. This sense of belonging and mutual support can contribute to positive morale among team members. Effective training programs are typically supported by organizational structures that recognize and value the efforts of military personnel. When individuals feel that their training efforts are acknowledged and supported by their superiors and peers, they are more likely to experience positive morale. Comprehensive training equips military personnel with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively navigate challenging and high-pressure situations. As individuals feel better prepared and equipped to handle the demands of their roles, they are likely to experience greater confidence and resilience, contributing to positive morale. This finding is consistent with that Emmanuel and Ochogwu (2021) who revealed that training gives individual sense of belonging and mutual support which in turns serves as morale booster.

Relationship between military training, counselling, and morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army.

Research question two and the corresponding hypothesis sought to assess the correlation between military training, counselling, and the morale of personnel of the Nigerian Army**.** The result indicated that there is a significant relationship between training, counselling, and the morale of the Nigerian Army. Training programmes are foundational in equipping military personnel with the skills and confidence necessary to carry out their duties effectively. Through comprehensive training, individuals develop a sense of preparedness and competence, which positively influences their morale. Quality training instills pride in one's abilities and fosters motivation among personnel.

Counselling services play a crucial role in supporting the mental and emotional health of military personnel. The unique challenges associated with military service, such as deployment and combat exposure, can take a toll on mental well-being. Counseling provides a confidential and supportive space for personnel to address these challenges, develop coping strategies, and build resilience. Access to counseling demonstrates an organizational commitment to personnel welfare and contributes to a supportive culture that prioritizes mental health.

Training and counseling collectively enhance personnel's coping mechanisms and sense of support within the military community. Training programs promote teamwork and camaraderie, fostering a cohesive environment where personnel feel supported by their peers. Counseling sessions offer individuals the opportunity to connect with trained professionals who understand the demands of military life, creating a sense of solidarity and shared experiences. The integration of training and counseling reflects a commitment to promoting a positive organizational culture within the Nigerian military. The finding is in line with Hoge (2004) who revealed that, counselling sessions foster a feeling of community and common experiences. The finding is also consistent with Avey, et al (2012) and and Adler et al (2016) who reported that training and counseling reflects a commitment to promoting a positive organizational culture within the Nigerian military.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that several factors are significantly linked to the morale of the Nigerian Army. These include Military training that enhances skills and positively impacts morale. Based on this conclusion it was recommended that the government should invest in comprehensive training programs that not only focus on skills development but also prioritize confidence-building and resilience training to bolster morale among military personnel.

Counselling Implications

Based on the findings regarding the significant relationship between training and the morale of the Nigerian Army, here are counseling implications:

1. Counselors can use the findings of the study to identify specific training needs among personnel in the Nigerian Army. Counsellors may suggest training programs targeted at filling up identified gaps and raising morale by having a thorough awareness of the elements that affect spirits.
2. Counseling interventions can focus on enhancing leadership skills among military personnel, as effective leadership has been found to positively influence morale. Counselors can provide leadership training, coaching, and feedback to support

personnel in developing their leadership capabilities and fostering a positive command climate.

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