



INFLUENCE OF COMBAT EXPOSURE ON SEXUAL SATISFACTION AMONG MILITARY PERSONNEL IN ABUJA

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Abstract

The study examined the Influence of Combat Exposure and Sexual Satisfaction Among Personnel and their Spouses in Abacha Barracks Abuja. A cross-sectional survey design was used in which participants voluntarily answered an online survey through Google form. The participants included personnel of the Nigerian Armed Forces and their spouses. A total sample of 86 personnel and their spouses, comprising 60 (49.8%) males and 26 (30.2%) females participated. Index of Sexual Satisfaction (ISS) and Combat Experiences Subscale of the Deployment Risk & Resilience Inventory-2 (DRRI-2) instrument were used to collect data. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested. The first hypothesis stated that combat exposure will predict sexual satisfaction among personnel and their spouses in Abacha Barracks, Abuja. This hypothesis was tested using Linear Regression Analysis and the results revealed no significant influence of combat exposure on sexual satisfaction ($R = .109$; $F = 1.004$, $P > .05NS$). Hypothesis two stated that there will be a significant gender difference in sexual satisfaction among personnel and their spouses in Abacha Barracks, Abuja. This hypothesis was tested using Independent Sample t-test and the results revealed no statistical significant difference between male and female on sexual satisfaction ($t(84) = -0.238$, $P > .05NS$). It was concluded that combat exposure does not predict sexual satisfaction; however, the type of commission has a significant influence on sexual satisfaction. The researcher recommends that more support systems and psychological interventions during deployments in combat zones, with exploration of additional factors influencing sexual satisfaction, and open dialogues on sexual health to enable personnel and their spouses understand the interplay between combat exposure and sexual satisfaction.

Keywords: Combat Exposure, Sexual Satisfaction, Military Personnel, Commissioned and Non-commissioned Officers.

Introduction

Sexual intimacy is a key aspect of marital relationship, but happens to be one of the least discussed topics especially in our society. This is often because of the cultural meaning we tie to the subject matter and how we tend to make it an abdominal discussion. Military spouse being a product of our culture are less likely to report the level of sexual satisfaction they may experience in their marriages. It is key that we put into consideration the sexual life of the military men if we want to get the best of them. Defining sexual satisfaction involves considering various factors such as emotional, psychological, and physical well-being in the context of intimate relationships. According to Hewings-Martin (2017), sexual satisfaction is commonly understood as an individual's subjective evaluation of the quality and fulfillment derived from their sexual experiences within a relationship. This encompasses a range of factors, including but not limited to emotional connection, communication, physical pleasure, and overall contentment with one's sexual life. Additionally, sexual satisfaction can be influenced by personal preferences, cultural norms, and the dynamics of the specific relationship. The evaluation of sexual satisfaction is subjective and varies widely among individuals, making it a complex and multifaceted construct that is often studied in the context of interpersonal relationships and overall well-being.

On the other hand, combat exposure, a pivotal facet of military service, refers to the direct or indirect involvement in armed conflict or hazardous situations, exposing individuals to the physical, psychological, and emotional rigors of warfare. Long deployment often accompanied by combat exposures are likely accompanied by psychological factors and these factors affect a lot of things, including the sexual performance of military men. The link between combat exposure and sexual satisfaction among military men is a nuanced and underexplored aspect of their overall well-being. The intense and often traumatic nature of combat experiences can have profound effects on individuals' mental health, influencing their interpersonal relationships, including intimate connections. The stress, trauma, and psychological strain associated with combat exposure may impact sexual satisfaction,

potentially manifesting as challenges in establishing and maintaining healthy intimate relationships. Understanding this complex interplay is crucial for comprehending the holistic impact of military service on the personal lives of servicemen and can inform targeted interventions to address and support the unique needs of military personnel in cultivating fulfilling intimate relationships despite the challenges posed by combat exposure. It is against this background that this study delves into the intricate interplay between the experiences of combat and their potential effects on the sexual satisfaction of individuals serving in the Nigerian Army.

Literature Review

The Nigerian military plays a vital role in maintaining national security, often exposing its personnel to challenging and high-stress environments. While combat exposure is known to have profound effects on mental health, its specific impact on intimate relationships, particularly sexual satisfaction, remains an underexplored area of research. Recognizing the importance of a healthy and satisfying personal life for overall well-being, this study seeks to shed light on the dynamics between combat experiences and sexual satisfaction among army personnel in Abuja.

The impact of sexual satisfaction on military performance is a multifaceted and as such reveals complex interplay between wartime experiences and intimate relationships. A study by Wilkins et al. (2018) found that combat exposure is associated with increased rates of sexual dysfunction among veterans, with elevated levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) serving as a mediator in this relationship. The psychological toll of combat, characterized by intrusive memories, hypervigilance, and avoidance, can contribute to sexual difficulties, affecting both desire and arousal (Wilkins et al., 2018).

Research suggests that individuals experiencing higher levels of sexual satisfaction may exhibit improved mental and emotional resilience, contributing to enhanced focus, decision-making, and stress management (Yalcin-Siedentopf, et al., 2021). A positive and satisfying

intimate relationship can serve as a crucial support system, fostering a sense of stability and motivation within military personnel. Conversely, unresolved issues related to sexual dissatisfaction may contribute to stress, distraction, and diminished morale, potentially affecting job performance and overall military readiness (Human Performance Resource center, 2021). According to Wilcox et al., (2015) high combat exposure is a predictor of erectile dysfunction among south African young male soldiers.

Furthermore, research by Carter et al. (2016) emphasizes the role of relationship satisfaction as a mediator in the impact of combat exposure on sexual performance. The study suggests that combat experiences can strain intimate relationships, leading to decreased satisfaction and communication within couples, which, in turn, influences sexual functioning. The study underscores the importance of addressing relational dynamics alongside individual mental health concerns when considering the impact of combat exposure on sexual performance

In contrast, a review by Smith and Renshaw (2018) acknowledges the complexity of this relationship, suggesting that while combat exposure can contribute to sexual difficulties, contextual factors such as relationship quality and coping mechanisms may moderate or mitigate these effects. Their work emphasizes the need for a nuanced understanding of the individual and relational factors that contribute to the impact of combat exposure on sexual performance among military personnel (Smith & Renshaw, 2018). Overall, the existing literature underscores the multifaceted nature of the relationship between combat exposure and sexual performance, calling for comprehensive approaches that address both individual psychological well-being and the dynamics of intimate relationships among military personnel.

Meanwhile indirect links between elevated combat exposure and sexual health issues, mediated through likely post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), were observed in relation to both sexual health outcomes (Rosebrock, & Carroll, 2016), thereby building upon previous research that identified PTSD as a mediator in the connection between military stressors like

exposure to warfare and family/relationship outcomes (Creech et al.,2016; Smith et al., 2017), these findings collectively indicate that combat exposure heightens the risk of developing PTSD. Consequently, individuals with PTSD face increased odds of experiencing both relationship difficulties and sexual health problems. Recognizing the significance of these associations is crucial, as robust intimate relationships serve as a protective factor against stress and depression. Although Badour et al., (2015) suggest that there is a positive relationship between high combat exposure and sexual dysfunction among male military men.

Jennifer et al., (2021) found that the connection between lifetime sexual assault and sexual health is not as uniform as the association between recent combat experience and sexual health. Notably, only the indirect impact of sexual assault, leading to new-onset sexual dysfunction through probable PTSD, was found to be significant. These unexpected and divergent findings are less congruent with previous research that has consistently established a link between sexual assault and harassment during military service and sexual dysfunction among male service members.

Looking from the perspective of gender Stephenson et al., (2021) noted that Gender differences may exist in how sexual satisfaction relates to quality of life. For men, satisfaction with internal aspects of sex, such as physical pleasure, may hold greater significance, whereas for women, satisfaction with interpersonal aspects, such as emotional connection, may be more crucial. While Jaycox et al., (2023) added that it could go ahead to affect their health at long run.

In our society few studies have actually investigated the place of combat exposure on sexual satisfaction among the military men, particularly in Abuja. This study thereby tries to fill in this gap in the academic filed, with the aim of proffering solution to this menace.

Method

Design

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design; the study recruited couples who willingly participated in an online survey via Google Forms. To maintain consistency, couples completed the survey on separate occasions but using the same device. The sample underwent screening to assess the impact of combat exposure on both military personnel and their spouses' sexual satisfaction. The integration of responses on the Google Forms back end enabled the linkage of scores for comprehensive analysis.

Participants

A total of 86 participants, with 60 (49.8%) being male personnel previously exposed to combat operations and 26 (30.2%) being female spouses of personnel with similar combat exposure participated in the study. Inclusion criteria mandated participants to be individuals with combat experience, accompanied by an intimate partner who was in a relationship with the personnel during the period of combat exposure and currently resides in Abacha barracks.

A further breakdown of participants is given as follows; a total of 86 personnel and their spouses, consisting of 60 males and 26 females. The study revealed participant ages ranging from 20 to 45 years, with a mean age of 28.94 and a standard deviation of 4.062. Regarding marital status, 19 (22.1%) were dating, 27 (31.4%) were single, and 40 (46.5%) were married. In terms of work category, 64 (74.4%) were military, and 22 (25.6%) were civilians. The distribution across arms of service included 49 (57%) Army, 10 (11.6%) Air Force, 5 (5.8%) Navy, and 22 (25.6%) marked as civilians. Personnel types included 40 (46.5%) commissioned officers, 24 (27.9%) non-commissioned officers, and 22 (25.6%) civilians. The distribution of ranks encompassed various positions, such as Sergeants (N=2), Captains (N=3), Warrant officers (N=1), Flight officers (N=7), Lance corporals (N=14), Lieutenants (N=24), 2nd lieutenants (N=4), Privates (N=6), Majors (N=3), and 22 civilians.

Sample Size/ Sample Technique

Personnel and their respective partners were recruited from Abacha Barracks, Abuja, using a convenience sampling technique. Out of 100 couples, 86 met the specified criteria for participation. The majority of the personnel and their female partners were aged between 24 and 40 years. Personnel from various military branches were included, with 70.0% originating from the Army, while the remainder was from the Air Force (15%) and the Navy (15%). The couples had a marital duration ranging from 1 to 5 years, and notably, 90% of them had children during their deployment.

Instrument

The study utilized a questionnaire divided into three sections. Section A gathered data on demographic factors, including age, marital status, type of commissioning, and gender from the participants. Couples were matched using case numbers for joint analysis, with a total of 86 out of 100 couples meeting the participation criteria. Most personnel and their female partners fell within the age range of 24 to 40 years, representing a diverse sample across military branches, primarily the Army (70%).

Index of Sexual Satisfaction (ISS)

The Index of Sexual Satisfaction (ISS) of Hudson (1982) is a comprehensive 25-item inventory designed to gauge diverse aspects of sexual satisfaction and evaluate the extent to which individuals derive contentment from their sexual relationships. Crafted with sensitivity to the privacy associated with intimate matters, the ISS employs carefully worded items to explore attitudes, feelings, and preferences related to different forms of sexual behavior. Utilizing both direct and reverse scoring items, the ISS ensures a nuanced assessment, where direct scores encompass shaded items, and reverse scores involve a change in numerical values. Norms for interpreting ISS scores are based on both American and Nigerian samples, with scores exceeding the norms signaling poor or problematic sexual satisfaction, while scores below the norms indicate satisfactory levels. Developed with psychometric rigor, the ISS stands as a valuable tool for researchers and clinicians seeking culturally sensitive insights into sexual satisfaction across diverse populations.

Combat Experiences Scale

The Combat Experiences Scale is a component of the Deployment Risk & Resilience Inventory-2 (DRRI-2) and serves as a vital tool for assessing 17 distinct factors related to deployment, categorized into pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment phases. The scale was developed as part of a comprehensive four-year research program sponsored by the Department of Veteran Affairs to update the original DRRI. It involves a 5-point Likert response format, ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Daily or almost daily), with higher scores indicating greater exposure to combat. The DRRI-2, including the Combat Experiences Scale, underwent rigorous psychometric validation, ensuring its applicability across various deployment circumstances and military subgroups. The development process involved content validity analysis, focus groups, national surveys, and psychometric assessments to create a robust instrument for evaluating deployment-related risk and resilience factors (Vogt et al., 2013).

Procedure

This research engaged military personnel and their intimate partners who willingly participated in an online survey administered through Google Forms. To ensure independence in responses, participants were instructed to complete the survey individually, though not necessarily simultaneously. The sample underwent screening to assess the impact of combat exposure and sexual satisfaction, measured using the Combat Exposure Scale (CES) and Index of Sexual Satisfaction (ISS). Participant scores were linked through their responses in the Google Forms back end, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Importantly, participation was voluntary and uncompensated, emphasizing the commitment to safeguarding participants' privacy throughout the study.

Data analysis

The data collected underwent analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 26). Descriptive statistics, including mean, frequency, percentages, and standard

deviation, were employed for the analysis of demographic characteristics. Additionally, inferential statistics were applied: Linear Regression Analysis and Independent t-test was utilized to test hypotheses.

Result s

The result from the study is given below;

Table 1: Summary Results of the Linear Regression Analysis on Sexual Satisfaction among Personnel and their Spouses in Abuja

Variables	B	t	R	R²	F
Combat exposure	.138	1.002	.109	.012	1.004

Sig. Level: **P* = .05, ***P* = .01 (df=1, 84)

Table 1 show the summary results of Linear Regression Analysis where it revealed that there is no statistical significant influence of combat exposure on sexual satisfaction (*R*= .109; *F*= 1.004, *P*> .05NS) and this accounted for about 1.2% variance for sexual satisfaction among personnel and their spouses in Abuja. Also, the results indicated no significant relationship between combat exposure (β = .138; *t*= 1.002, *p*> .05NS) and sexual satisfaction among personnel and their spouses in Abuja. This implies that combat exposure has no significant effect on sexual satisfaction among personnel and their spouses in Abuja.

Table 2: Difference between Male and Female on Sexual Satisfaction among Personnel and their Spouses in Abuja

Gender	N	M	SD	df	T	Sig.
Male	60	99.23	21.886	84	-0.238	.813
Female	26	100.38	17.314			

t(84) = -0.238, *P* > .05NS

Table 2 shows the summary results of the difference between Male and Female on Sexual Satisfaction among Personnel and their Spouses in Abuja. The analysis revealed the mean and standard deviation scores for male personnel (M= 99.23; SD= 21.886) and female personnel (M= 100.38; SD= 17.314). Further analysis of the results revealed no statistically

significant difference between male and female personnel on sexual satisfaction $t(84) = -0.238, P > .05NS$. This implies that gender indicates no significant mean difference in sexual satisfaction among personnel and their spouses in Abuja.

Discussion

The study's results indicate a lack of a significant relationship between combat exposure and sexual satisfaction, suggesting that combat exposure may not substantially influence the sexual satisfaction of military personnel and their spouses in Abuja. These findings challenge previous research, such as the study by Badour et al. (2015), which suggested a predictive link between combat exposure and sexual satisfaction. The discrepancy in findings may stem from the support systems in place during deployments, where soldiers are granted passes at intervals to reconnect with their families, potentially alleviating the stress associated with combat deployment. The breaks during deployment could contribute to soldiers adapting better to stress, fostering a smoother transition upon returning home. Additionally, the results may reflect the effectiveness of psychological interventions provided by the military throughout the deployment phases, aiding veterans in readjusting to normal functioning post-deployment.

Furthermore, the study's findings revealed no significant difference in satisfaction levels between genders, challenging the notion of gender-based disparities in sexual satisfaction. This outcome contradicts the findings of Stephenson et al. (2021), which proposed gender differences in sexual satisfaction levels. The observed lack of gender-based variation in satisfaction levels can be elucidated by considering sexual satisfaction as a subjective experience shaped by personal factors such as individual experiences, orientations, and feelings, rather than being inherently tied to gender. This perspective suggests that the satisfaction individuals derive from their sexual experiences is more influenced by personal experiences and factors unique to each individual rather than being solely determined by gender. In essence, the study suggests that gender itself may not be a decisive factor in

accounting for variations in satisfaction levels, emphasizing the importance of individual differences and subjective experiences in shaping sexual satisfaction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has delved into the complex interplay between combat exposure and sexual satisfaction among military personnel and their spouses in Abuja, Nigeria. The research has contributed valuable insights to the underexplored dynamics of how combat experiences may or may not impact sexual satisfaction within the context of intimate relationships. Contrary to some prior findings, this study revealed that combat exposure does not exert a significant effect on sexual satisfaction among military personnel and their spouses in Abuja. The results suggest that the structured breaks during deployments and the psychological interventions provided by the military may play crucial roles in mitigating the potential impact of combat exposure on sexual satisfaction. Moreover, the study challenged the notion of gender-based disparities in sexual satisfaction, finding no significant differences between male and female participants. This emphasizes the subjective nature of sexual satisfaction, influenced more by individual experiences and factors than by gender. Overall, this research contributes to the broader understanding of the intricate relationship between combat experiences and sexual satisfaction, shedding light on factors that may influence the well-being of military personnel and their intimate relationships. Further research in this area is warranted to explore additional variables and contexts that may shape the complex dynamics between combat exposure and sexual satisfaction among military populations.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations from this study:

- i. **Enhance Support Systems During Deployments:** Given the potential role of support systems in mitigating the impact of combat exposure on sexual satisfaction, it is recommended that military organizations in Abuja and beyond continue to

strengthen and improve support structures for personnel during deployments. This could involve maintaining and expanding programs that facilitate regular breaks and opportunities for soldiers to reconnect with their families. These initiatives may contribute to alleviating stress associated with deployment and, consequently, positively impact sexual satisfaction.

- ii. **Evaluate and Enhance Effectiveness of Psychological Interventions:** The study hints at the effectiveness of psychological interventions provided by the military in aiding veterans' readjustment post-deployment. A thorough evaluation of these interventions, followed by potential enhancements, could be beneficial. It is recommended that military authorities invest in ongoing assessments of psychological support programs to ensure they address the unique challenges faced by military personnel and their spouses, particularly concerning intimate relationships and sexual satisfaction.
- iii. **Explore Additional Factors Influencing Sexual Satisfaction:** While combat exposure and gender were examined in this study, it is crucial to recognize that sexual satisfaction is a multifaceted construct influenced by various factors. Future research should explore additional variables that may contribute to sexual satisfaction among military personnel and their spouses. This could include investigating the impact of communication styles, relationship dynamics, and individual coping mechanisms on sexual satisfaction.
- iv. **Facilitate Open Dialogues on Sexual Health:** Acknowledging the cultural context that often makes discussions on sexual matters challenging, it is recommended that efforts be made to facilitate open and non-judgmental dialogues on sexual health within military communities. This could involve educational programs, workshops, or counseling services aimed at fostering healthy conversations about sexual satisfaction, relationships, and overall well-being.

- v. **Longitudinal Studies on Sexual Satisfaction and Combat Exposure:** To further enrich the understanding of the relationship between combat exposure and sexual satisfaction, it is advisable to conduct longitudinal studies. Long-term assessments could provide insights into how these dynamics evolve over time, considering factors such as the duration of deployments, the cumulative effect of multiple deployments, and changes in support systems. Longitudinal studies would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the nuanced interplay between combat experiences and sexual satisfaction in the context of military life.

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