

Attitudes To Drug Use In Predicting Marital Stability Among Military Couples In Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *Marital stability among military couples is influenced by several factors, including attitudes towards drug abuse and age demographics. This study aimed to explore these relationships among 1,445 married soldiers stationed in Lagos, Nigeria, using a descriptive survey design. Data collection employed the Drug Use Attitude Scale and Marital Stability Scale. The analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between favorable attitudes towards drug abstinence and marital stability ($r = 0.102$, $p < 0.01$, $r^2 = 0.01$), suggesting that abstaining from drug use correlates with higher levels of marital stability. This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the impact of health behaviours and lifestyle choices on relationship quality. Moreover, age emerged as a critical factor influencing marital stability ($F_{(4,1219)} = 27.723$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.08$). Specifically, younger couples (21-30 years) and middle-aged couples (51-60 years) reported greater stability compared to other age groups. This underscores the importance of considering life stage and generational factors in understanding marital dynamics among military personnel (Frye-Cox, et.al, 2021; Janina, et.al, 2024). The implications of these findings advocate for targeted interventions within military settings. Efforts to promote positive attitudes towards drug abstinence and provide age-specific support mechanisms could enhance marital resilience and relational satisfaction among military couples. Future research should incorporate longitudinal designs to track changes in marital stability over time and utilize qualitative methods to capture nuanced experiences and perceptions. In conclusion, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between attitudes towards drug use, age demographics, and marital stability within military contexts. By addressing these dynamics through evidence-based interventions and further research, military organizations can effectively support the well-being and relational health of their personnel and their families.*

Key words: Attitudes to Drug Use, Marital Stability, Military Couples

Introduction

The use of drugs among military personnel has long been a significant concern due to its potential impact on individual health, professional performance, and interpersonal relationships, particularly within the context of marriage. Marriage, an essential social institution aimed at achieving companionship and procreation, is diverse in its forms and universally regarded as central to society (Enamudu, 2023). According to Enamudu (2023), marriage serves as a means through which emotional and sexual satisfaction is attained, and procreation fulfills a divine mandate. Marriage is universally recognized as a crucial social institution aimed at companionship and procreation (Enamudu, 2023). It serves as a fundamental pillar of society, fulfilling emotional and reproductive needs as ordained by societal norms and religious beliefs.

Marital stability remains a challenge (Maciver, et.al, 2012; Ojukwu, 2017; Roberts, 2007; Stevenson, 2011; Ross, et.al, 2019), influenced by factors such as age at marriage, educational attainment of spouses, religion, finances, infertility, and social status. Stressors like bitterness, success and failures, duration of marriage, academic achievements, religious affiliations, economic status, family background, cultural differences, and communication also impact marital stability (Ojukwu, 2017). Despite increasing marital instability among Nigerian soldiers, little attention has been given to specific factors contributing to this issue. Spooner and Hetherington (2004) as cited in Enamudu (2023) define attitude towards drug use as persistent use of illicit substances that alter body chemistry and functions. Drug abuse adversely affects physiological, economic, cognitive, and social aspects of life (Strickland, 2014). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2023) estimates that drug-related diseases and injuries cause approximately 2.5

million deaths globally each year, with associated implications including criminal involvement and financial strain on families due to drug-related illnesses.

These factors often lead to marital conflicts and instability among soldiers. Soldiers are commonly involved in behaviours such as smoking, excessive drinking, and womanising (Enamudu, 2023), which may result in absenteeism, impaired performance, and financial irresponsibility. Additionally, soldiers returning from foreign deployments may bring foreign women into their barracks, further complicating marital stability (Keren, 2017).

This study aims to explore the relationship between soldiers' attitudes towards drug use and the stability of their marital relationships, providing valuable insights into substance use within military settings and proposing interventions and support systems. The use of drugs among military personnel has been a longstanding concern due to its potential impact on individual health, professional performance, and interpersonal relationships, particularly within the context of marriage.

Globally, the issue of marital stability remains complex, influenced by diverse factors such as age at marriage, educational attainment of spouses, religious beliefs, financial stability, infertility issues, and societal status (Ojukwu, 2017; Roberts, 2007; Stevenson, 2011; Ross, et.al, 2019). These factors contribute to stressors within marriages, including financial pressures, cultural differences, and communication breakdowns (Ojukwu, 2017). Despite the prevalence of marital instability among military personnel, specific factors contributing to this phenomenon have received inadequate attention. Enamudu (2023) cites Spooner and Hetherington (2004) in highlighting the persistent use of illicit substances among soldiers and its detrimental effects on physiological, economic, cognitive, and social aspects of life. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2023) reports that drug-related diseases and injuries account for significant global mortality rates annually, underscoring the far-reaching consequences of substance abuse on individual and familial well-being.

Military personnel often engage in risky behaviours such as excessive drinking, smoking, and extramarital relationships, which can lead to absenteeism, compromised performance, and financial strain (Keren, 2017). Moreover, soldiers returning from deployments may introduce foreign influences, such as foreign partners, into their marital dynamics, further complicating stability (Keren 2017). This study aims to explore the relationship between soldiers' attitudes towards drug use and the stability of their marital relationships, offering insights into substance use within military settings and proposing targeted interventions and support mechanisms to address these challenges.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant relationship between drug abuse and marital stability among military couples in Lagos Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant difference in the marital stability of military couples based on age.

Literature Review

Existing literature underscores the complex relationship between attitudes towards drug use and diverse facets of personal and social functioning. Negative attitudes towards drug use are frequently linked with healthier lifestyle behaviours, enhanced decision-making capabilities, and improved interpersonal relationships, including marital stability (Johnston et al., 2020; Hamza, et.al, 2021). These findings highlight the critical importance of comprehending these dynamics to develop effective interventions tailored to support military personnel and their families.

Johnston et al. (2020) emphasise that individuals exhibiting negative attitudes towards drug use often demonstrate greater adherence to health-promoting behaviours and exhibit higher levels of self-regulation in various life domains. Such individuals are more likely to make informed decisions that positively impact their personal well-being and social interactions, including within marital contexts. Hamza, et.al (2021) further explore how positive attitudes towards drug abstinence are associated with reduced conflict and greater satisfaction in marital relationships among military couples. Their findings underscore the role of attitudes towards substance use in shaping marital dynamics and stability.

Understanding these intricate interrelationships is crucial for designing targeted interventions aimed at promoting healthier behaviours and supporting military personnel and their families. Effective interventions can include educational programs, counselling services, and policy initiatives that foster a supportive environment conducive to maintaining marital stability amidst the challenges posed by drug use attitudes within military settings.

Methodology

This study utilised a descriptive survey design of the ex-post-facto type to gather comprehensive data. An ex-post-facto research design investigates relationships between variables where the independent variables are not directly controlled by the researcher, either because they have already occurred or are naturally uncontrollable. Inferences about these relationships are drawn from observed variations in independent and dependent variables without direct manipulation. The target population consisted of all married soldiers stationed in army barracks in Lagos State, Nigeria, estimated at 9,636 soldiers (HQ Nigerian Army Archives, March

14, 2019). According to available data, there are twenty-eight barracks in the South-Western Zone of the country (HQ Nigerian Army Archives, March 14, 2019).

A sample of 1,445 soldiers, representing 15% of the population, was selected using proportionate stratified sampling. This approach ensured that every member of the population had an equal chance of being selected. Purposive sampling was employed to select army barracks from Lagos State due to its representation of 19 out of 28 barracks in the South-Western Zone. Quantitative data were collected through surveys utilizing the Drug Use Attitude Scale and Marital Stability Scale among married soldiers in Lagos State.

Findings

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant relationship between drug abuse and marital stability among military couple in Lagos Nigeria.

Table 1: PPMC Summary showing relationship between drug abuse and marital stability among military couple in Lagos, Nigeria.

Variable	N	Mean	St.dv	df(n-2)	r	Sig	r ²
Marital stability	1224	56.02	8.97	1222	0.102	<0.05	0.01
Attitude to Drug abuse	1224	41.32	9.30				

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 reveals that there is a significant relationship between drug abuse and marital stability; $r_{(1222)} = 0.102$, $p < 0.01$, $r^2 = 0.01$. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. The table further reveals that increase in drug abuse will create a resultant increase in marital stability among military couple in Lagos, Nigeria. Effect size (r^2) reveals that drug abuse accounts for 1% increase in marital stability among military couple.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant difference in the marital stability of military couples based on age.

Table 2: ANOVA summary showing difference between marital stability and age

Variable	Mean	St.dv	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	η^2
21-30 years	59.49	9.12	8198.14	4	2049.54	27.723	0.00	0.08
31-40 years	54.57	8.28	90119.31	1219	73.93			
41-50 years	53.19	8.17	98317.45	1223				
51-60 years	58.49	9.23						
61 years and above	52.11	9.27						

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 reveals that there is a significant difference in the marital stability of military couple based on their age; $f_{(4,1219)} = 27.723$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.08$. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. The table further reveals that military couple with age range of 21-30 years ($x = 59.49$) record the highest marital stability, followed by 51-60 years ($x = 58.49$), 31-40 years ($x = 54.57$), 41-50 years ($x = 53.19$) and 61 years and above ($x = 52.11$). The grand mean is 56.02, this implies that those with the age range of 21-30 years and 51-60 years have a higher tendency to record better marital stability. Effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.08$) reveals that age accounts for 8% of marital stability among military couple in Lagos, Nigeria.

Discussions

The findings of this study contribute to the existing literature on factors influencing marital stability among military couples, particularly in the context of attitudes towards drug abuse and age demographics. These findings underscore the significance of both attitudinal factors and age-related dynamics in shaping marital relationships within military settings.

The first hypothesis tested in this study aimed to examine the relationship between drug abuse and marital stability among military couples in Lagos, Nigeria. Contrary to the initial expectation of no significant relationship, the findings presented in Table 1 indicate a statistically significant association between drug abuse and marital stability ($r_{(1222)} = 0.102$, ($p < 0.01$), ($r^2 = 0.01$)). This result leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis, suggesting that drug abuse does indeed impact marital stability among military couples.

The observed relationship suggests that an increase in drug abuse is linked with a marginal increase in marital stability among the studied population. Despite the small effect size ($r^2 = 0.01$), which indicates that drug abuse explains only 1% of the variance in marital stability, the findings underscore the importance of considering substance use attitudes in understanding marital dynamics.

These findings resonate with previous research emphasizing the role of attitudes towards substance use in marital outcomes. Johnston et al. (2020) highlighted that negative attitudes towards substance use are associated with healthier lifestyle choices and improved interpersonal relationships, which are critical for sustaining marital harmony. Similarly, Hamza, et.al, (2021) found that positive attitudes towards drug abstinence contribute significantly to marital stability.

The implications of these findings extend beyond the direct impact of drug abuse on marital stability. They suggest that attitudes towards substance use serve as proxies for broader relational dynamics within military couples. For instance, the stressors unique to military life, such as deployments and frequent relocations, may interact with attitudes towards drug use to influence marital outcomes (Karney & Crown, 2007).

Based on the provided data and findings, Hypothesis 2 posited that there would be no significant difference in the marital stability of military couples based on age. However, the results from Table 2 indicate otherwise, revealing a significant effect of age on marital stability among military couples in Lagos, Nigeria.

The ANOVA summary presented in Table 2 shows notable differences in marital stability across different age groups (Field Survey, 2024). Specifically, couples aged 21-30 years reported the highest mean marital stability ($M = 59.49$), followed by those aged 31-40 years ($M = 58.49$), whereas couples aged 41 years and above reported the lowest mean stability ($M = 52.11$). This variance is statistically significant ($F_{(4, 1219)} = 27.723$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.08$), indicating that age explains 8% of the variability in marital stability among military couples.

The findings highlight that age-specific factors significantly influence marital stability within this demographic. Younger couples and those in midlife tend to experience higher levels of marital stability compared to older couples. This aligns with existing research suggesting that life stage and generational differences impact relationship dynamics (Frye-Cox et.al, 2021; Janina, et.al, 2024).

Moreover, the substantial effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.08$) underscores the relevance of age as a determinant of marital stability, suggesting that interventions and support strategies tailored to different age groups may be beneficial for enhancing marital quality among military couples (Field Survey, 2024).

These findings are consistent with existing literature that highlights the impact of life stage and generational differences on marital relationships. Studies by Frye-Cox et.al (2021) emphasize how couples in different life stages may navigate conflicts and maintain stability differently, influenced by factors such as career demands, health concerns, and emotional maturity. Similarly, Nicholas (2013) discusses generational shifts in marital quality, emphasizing economic and social changes that affect relationship dynamics over time.

The substantial effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.08$) indicates that age-related factors explain a noteworthy portion of the variance in marital stability observed among military couples. This underscores the importance of age-specific interventions and support systems tailored to address the unique needs and challenges faced by couples at different stages of life within military communities.

Recommendations

Develop targeted interventions to promote positive attitudes towards drug use among military personnel, aiming to enhance marital stability. These programs could include educational campaigns, counseling services, and support groups.

Provide age-specific support mechanisms for military couples, focusing on the unique challenges and needs of different age groups. This could involve tailored counseling sessions, workshops on relationship skills, and access to marital counseling services.

Conduct further research to explore additional factors influencing marital stability among military couples, such as deployment frequency, communication patterns, and socio-economic factors. Longitudinal studies could also provide deeper insights into the dynamics of marital relationships over time. By implementing these recommendations, military organizations can potentially strengthen marital bonds among personnel, thereby enhancing overall well-being and operational effectiveness.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study underscores the complex interplay of attitudes towards drug abuse and age-related factors in influencing marital stability among military couples. By addressing these dynamics through evidence-based interventions and further research, military organizations can enhance the well-being and resilience of their personnel and their families.

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