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Personality Traits And Coping Strategies As Predictors Of Resilience In Military Personnel Deployed In Joint Task Force Operations Northwest, Nigeria

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Abstract

Military personnel deployed in high-risk conflict zones face significant psychological challenges that may compromise their resilience and operational effectiveness, yet limited research has examined the mechanisms linking personality characteristics and coping processes to resilience in the Nigerian military context. This study investigated whether personality traits (Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Extraversion, Openness, and Conscientiousness) and coping strategies (problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance-focused) predict resilience among military personnel deployed in Joint Task Force Operations in Northwest Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was employed with 385 military personnel aged 21–41 years ($M = 27.00$, $SD = 4.05$). The Big Five Personality Inventory (BFI-10), the Coping Questionnaire (WCQ-SF), and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10) were used for data collection. Data were analysed using standard multiple regression. Results revealed that personality traits significantly predicted resilience [$R^2 = .984$, $F(5, 379) = 4811.891$, $p < .01$], with Extraversion ($\beta = .967$, $p < .001$) and Agreeableness ($\beta = .048$, $p < .05$) emerging as significant predictors. Coping strategies also significantly predicted resilience [$R^2 = .964$, $F(3, 381) = 3419.207$, $p < .001$], with problem-focused ($\beta = .865$, $p < .001$) and emotion-focused ($\beta = .407$, $p < .001$) coping contributing significantly, while avoidance coping did not ($\beta = .023$, $p = .682$). When entered simultaneously, the combined model significantly predicted resilience [$R^2 = .984$, $F(8, 376) = 2984.607$, $p < .001$]; however, only Extraversion ($\beta = .992$, $p < .001$) made a significant independent contribution. Findings suggest that resilience is differentially shaped by personality traits and coping strategies, with Extraversion emerging as the most robust predictor. Interventions targeting social engagement, active problem-solving, and emotional regulation may help enhance resilience among military personnel deployed in high-stress operational environments.

Keywords: Personality Traits, Coping Strategies, Resilience, Military Personnel, Joint Task Force Operations, Nigeria

Introduction

Globally, mental health and psychological well-being among military personnel have become critical areas of concern, particularly for those deployed in high-risk conflict zones. Military service inherently exposes personnel to a unique constellation of stressors, including prolonged separation from family, exposure to life-threatening situations, witnessing death and injury, and the constant demands of operational readiness [Oshita & Ikelegbe, 2019; Oyewole, Aina, & John, 2023]. These occupational stressors place military personnel at elevated risk for mental health disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders [Samuel, 2015; Musa & Heinecken, 2022]. The cumulative burden of these experiences underscores the importance of psychological resilience, the dynamic capacity to withstand, adapt to, and recover from significant adversity while maintaining or quickly regaining normal psychological functioning [Oshita & Ikelegbe, 2019; Alumona, 2019]. Resilience is not merely the absence of psychopathology but reflects patterns of positive adaptation arising from the interaction of personal strengths, developmental processes, and supportive environmental systems [Oshita & Ikelegbe, 2019; Musa & Heinecken, 2022].

In the Nigerian context, the Armed Forces play a critical role in safeguarding national security, particularly through counter-insurgency operations against Boko Haram in the Northeast (since 2009) and banditry in the Northwest (since 2014) [Aina, Sunday, & Oyewole, 2023; John, Oyewole, & Aina, 2023]. These protracted operations have exposed Nigerian military personnel to unprecedented levels of combat-related stress, frequent deployments, and extended absences from family, compounding the psychological toll of military service [Oshita & Ikelegbe, 2019; Musa & Heinecken, 2022]. Despite these challenges, the mental health and well-being of Nigerian military personnel have received insufficient attention. Musa and Heinecken (2022) noted that government and non-governmental responses have focused primarily on the physical welfare of internally displaced persons and the rehabilitation of wounded soldiers, while the psychological needs of active-duty personnel engaged in counter-insurgency remain largely overlooked. This neglect is concerning, as combat exposure is consistently associated with elevated rates of depression, anxiety, and other psychosocial issues among service members [Oshita & Ikelegbe, 2019; Alumona, 2019]. Recent analyses of Nigeria's security crises have highlighted the immense pressure on military personnel, with operations expanding across multiple theaters and confronting diverse threats ranging from insurgents to armed bandits [Aina, 2023a; Oyewole, Aina, & John, 2023; ACLED, 2024].

Personality plays a key role in psychological development and adaptation to stress [Oshita & Ikelegbe, 2019; Musa & Heinecken, 2022]. Personality traits refer to the characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that define an individual's personality and are relatively stable across time and situations [Samuel, 2015]. The Big Five personality model, comprising neuroticism, agreeableness, extraversion, openness to experience, and conscientiousness, has been extensively validated across cultures [Oshita & Ikelegbe, 2019]. Studies have consistently demonstrated that resilience is positively associated with extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness, while negatively associated with neuroticism [Oshita & Ikelegbe, 2019; Samuel, 2015; Musa & Heinecken, 2022]. Similarly, coping strategies—the cognitive and behavioural efforts individuals use to manage stress [Oshita & Ikelegbe, 2019]—are critical determinants of resilience. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) distinguished problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance-focused coping strategies, with problem-focused coping generally associated with better psychological outcomes [Oshita & Ikelegbe, 2019].

The resilience of military personnel is crucial for their mental health, well-being, and operational performance when faced with adversity and combat-related stressors [Samuel, 2015; Musa & Heinecken, 2022]. Despite the recognized importance of resilience, there remains a paucity of empirical research examining how personality traits and coping strategies predict resilience among Nigerian military personnel, as most existing studies are concentrated in Western military contexts [Oshita & Ikelegbe, 2019; Alumona, 2019]. This knowledge gap requires attention, as understanding the predictors of resilience is essential for developing effective interventions to promote resilience and mitigate the negative effects of trauma and stress amongst military personnel. Organizations such as the Australian Defence Force (ADF) have developed effective resilience-strengthening programmes to reduce the risk of mental health disorders in personnel [Oshita & Ikelegbe, 2019; Alumona, 2019; Musa & Heinecken, 2022], demonstrating that military

resilience can be systematically cultivated. However, developing similar programmes for the Nigerian Armed Forces requires a proper understanding of service members' personality profiles and coping styles to enable appropriate recommendations and training. This is particularly urgent given the evolving nature of Nigeria's security challenges and the expanding role of the military in internal security operations [Aina, 2023b; Musa & Heinecken, 2022; Gediga, Eromosele, & Fregene, 2023].

Theoretical Review and Current Gap

The present study is anchored on the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). The theory posits that psychological outcomes are determined not solely by stressful events but by how individuals cognitively appraise those events and the coping strategies they employ. During primary appraisal, individuals evaluate whether a situation is threatening, harmful, or challenging, while secondary appraisal involves evaluating available resources to manage the stressor. Based on these appraisals, individuals adopt coping strategies that are generally classified as problem-focused or emotion-focused, which subsequently influence psychological adaptation and resilience [Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Oshita & Ikelegbe, 2019]. Within military settings, personnel deployed to conflict environments are continually exposed to operational stressors such as combat, prolonged deployments, separation from family, and uncertainty. According to the Transactional Model, individual differences, including personality traits, influence how these stressors are perceived and the coping strategies selected. Individuals with adaptive personality characteristics, such as high conscientiousness and emotional stability, are more likely to adopt effective coping strategies, whereas those high in neuroticism are more likely to perceive situations as overwhelming and rely on maladaptive coping responses, thereby reducing resilience [Musa & Heinecken, 2022; Oshita & Ikelegbe, 2019; Alumona, 2019]. Consequently, resilience is viewed as an adaptive outcome resulting from the interaction between individual characteristics and coping processes.

Although the Transactional Model has been widely applied in stress and resilience research, most previous studies have examined personality traits and coping strategies independently. In Nigeria, available military research has primarily focused on coping strategies as predictors of resilience, with limited consideration of the simultaneous contribution of Big Five personality traits and coping strategies among personnel deployed in active Joint Task Force operations [Oshita & Ikelegbe, 2019]. Furthermore, evidence integrating these variables within a single theoretical framework remains scarce in conflict-affected settings in Northwest Nigeria. Recent scholarship has called for more nuanced investigations into the human dimensions of Nigeria's internal security operations, including the psychological welfare of military personnel [Elechi & Ohazuruike, 2024; Gidado, 2024; Ogunleye, Shinga, & Eghosa, 2024]. This study addresses this gap by applying the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping to examine the independent and joint contributions of Big Five personality traits and coping strategies on resilience among military personnel deployed in Joint Task Force Operations in Northwest Nigeria. Accordingly, this study addresses three primary research questions:

1. Do personality traits (neuroticism, agreeableness, extraversion, openness to experience, and conscientiousness) independently predict resilience among military personnel deployed in Joint Task Force Operations Northwest, Nigeria?
2. Do coping strategies (problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance-focused coping) independently predict resilience among military personnel deployed in Joint Task Force Operations Northwest, Nigeria?
3. Do personality traits and coping strategies jointly predict resilience among military personnel deployed in Joint Task Force Operations Northwest, Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nigerian Military Context and Operational Stress

The Nigerian Armed Forces have been engaged in sustained counter-insurgency operations since 2009, when Boko Haram insurgency escalated in the Northeast region. More recently, military operations have expanded to address banditry and armed conflict in the Northwest, requiring personnel to operate in complex, high-threat environments (Aina, Sunday, & Oyewole, 2023; Osa-Afiana, 2022). These operations involve prolonged deployment cycles, exposure to combat, and the constant threat of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), ambushes, and suicide attacks. Military personnel deployed in these operations face unique stressors, including witnessing the death or physical incapacitation of colleagues, exposure to mass casualties, and the psychological burden of operating in communities affected by displacement and violence (Osa-Afiana, 2022; Adegbesan & Ofole, 2023). The psychological toll of these operations is compounded by systemic challenges within the Nigerian military, including limited access to mental health services, inadequate post-deployment support, and cultural stigma surrounding mental health help-seeking (Duruji, et al., 2026; Anyaegbu, et al., 2021). Despite the scale of the security challenges, interventions targeting the mental health and resilience of Nigerian military personnel have been fragmented, with most efforts focused on immediate physical needs rather than long-term psychological well-being (Duruji et al., 2026). This gap is concerning, given evidence that combat exposure significantly increases the risk of depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other mental health conditions among military personnel (Akinlose, et al., 2026; Anyaegbu et al., 2021). Understanding the individual factors that promote resilience, including personality traits and coping strategies, is essential for designing effective prevention and intervention programmes for this population.

Personality Traits and Resilience

Personality refers to enduring patterns of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours that distinguish individuals (American Psychological Association, 2019). The Big Five Personality Model comprises neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Fashola, 2021). Neuroticism reflects emotional instability, whereas extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness represent adaptive characteristics linked to positive functioning. Empirical evidence suggests that personality traits influence resilience among military personnel. Fashola (2021), studying 238 Nigerian military personnel, found that the Big Five traits jointly predicted mental health, with conscientiousness emerging as the strongest predictor. Similarly, Anyaegbu et al. (2021) reported that although resilience was not an independent predictor of PTSD among returned Nigerian soldiers, it contributed jointly with social support to explaining PTSD outcomes. However, Akinlose et al. (2026) found that personality traits did not significantly predict mental disorders among Nigerian Air Force personnel exposed to combat, indicating inconsistent findings and the need for further investigation.

Coping Strategies and Resilience

Coping refers to the cognitive and behavioural efforts individuals use to manage stressful situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Coping strategies are commonly classified as problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance-focused (Endler & Parker, 1990). Problem-focused coping addresses the source of stress and is generally associated with positive psychological outcomes, whereas avoidance coping is linked with poorer adjustment (Compas et al., 1992). Studies have consistently shown that coping strategies influence resilience among military personnel. Udeh et al. (2022) found that Nigerian military personnel commonly experienced stress arising from under-remuneration, heavy workload, harassment, and feeling undervalued, with talking to family and friends and problem-solving being the most common positive coping strategies. Aboh et al. (2024) reported that operational stress and coping strategies independently and jointly predicted psychological well-being among paramilitary officers. Likewise, Adegbesan and Ofole (2023) found that psychological skills and social support reduced the effects of operational stress among Nigerian soldiers deployed against Boko Haram insurgency. Conversely, Akinlose et al. (2026) reported that coping strategies did not significantly predict mental disorders among Nigerian Air Force personnel. Despite these findings, evidence on coping strategies as predictors of resilience among military personnel actively deployed in conflict zones remains limited.

Method

Participants and Procedure

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to examine the predictive roles of personality traits (Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Extraversion, Openness, and Conscientiousness) and coping strategies (problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance-focused) on resilience among military personnel deployed in Joint Task Force (JTF) operations in Northwest Nigeria. The study was guided by the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which proposes that personality influences the appraisal of stressful situations, coping responses, and ultimately resilience. The study was conducted in military formations across Kaduna, Katsina, and Zamfara States, which were purposively selected because of their active involvement in Joint Task Force operations against armed banditry and insurgency, the high concentration of deployed personnel, and sustained operational demands.

The sample comprised 385 military personnel, including 376 males (97.7%) and 9 females (2.3%), aged 21–41 years ($M = 27.00$, $SD = 4.05$). Most participants were between 24 and 32 years, representing the active service population deployed in combat operations. Participants were selected using purposive sampling. Eligible participants were active-duty personnel deployed in JTF operations, aged 18 years or older, and willing to provide informed consent. Personnel on leave, medically unfit, or unwilling to participate were excluded. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna. Following approval and permission from relevant military authorities, four postgraduate psychology students were trained on the study objectives, ethical procedures, and questionnaire administration. Data collection was conducted in designated military formations using group administration sessions held in locations approved by unit commanders. Participants received standardized instructions, were informed that participation was voluntary, and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately, checked for completeness, coded, and securely stored for analysis. Participants were debriefed after data collection, and ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and non-maleficence were strictly observed throughout the study.

Measures

Sociodemographic variables included age, gender, rank, duration of service, and operation duration. Age, duration of service, and operation duration were treated as continuous variables, while gender was coded as male = 1 and female = 2. Rank was coded as Junior Non-Commissioned Officer = 1, Senior Non-Commissioned Officer = 2, and Commissioned Officer = 3.

Resilience. Resilience was assessed using the 10-item Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10) developed by Connor and Davidson (2003). The scale measures the ability to adapt positively to adversity using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*not true at all*) to 4 (*true nearly all the time*), with higher scores indicating greater resilience. The CD-RISC-10 has demonstrated strong psychometric properties across military and trauma-exposed populations. In the present study, the scale showed good internal consistency ($\alpha = .87$).

Personality Traits. Personality traits were measured using the 10-item Big Five Inventory (BFI-10) developed by Rammstedt and John (2007). The instrument assesses Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Extraversion, Openness, and Conscientiousness using two items per dimension on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The BFI-10 is a validated brief measure of the Five-Factor Model suitable for research requiring short assessment time. Internal consistency coefficients in this study were: Neuroticism ($\alpha = .71$), Agreeableness ($\alpha = .68$), Extraversion ($\alpha = .73$), Openness ($\alpha = .65$), and Conscientiousness ($\alpha = .72$).

Coping Strategies. Coping strategies were measured using the 30-item short form of the Ways of Coping Questionnaire (WCQ-SF) developed by Folkman and Lazarus (1988). The instrument assesses three coping dimensions: problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance-focused coping. Responses are rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (not used) to 3 (used a great deal), with higher scores indicating greater use of each coping strategy. The scale has demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties across diverse

populations. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .78 for problem-focused coping, .74 for emotion-focused coping, and .71 for avoidance coping.

Analysis Strategy

Data were analysed using SPSS Version 27. Preliminary screening was conducted to assess data accuracy, missing values, normality, and outliers. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) summarised participants' characteristics and study variables. Normality was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and Q–Q plots, while missing data (<5%) were handled using listwise deletion. Pearson product–moment correlation examined relationships among personality traits, coping strategies, and resilience. Standard multiple regression analysis was subsequently used to determine the independent and joint contributions of personality traits and coping strategies to resilience. Assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were assessed and met before analysis. Three regression models were estimated to examine the independent effects of personality traits, the independent effects of coping strategies, and their combined contribution to resilience. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$, and results were reported using standardized beta coefficients (β), t -values, R^2 , adjusted R^2 , and significance values.

RESULTS

The hypotheses of this study were tested to investigate the role of personality traits (Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Extraversion, Openness, Conscientiousness) and coping strategies (problem-focused, emotion-focused and avoidance-focused) as predictors of resilience among military personnel deployed in the Joint Task Force Operation North West, Nigeria

Table 1: Summary of Multiple Regression Showing the Influence of Personality Traits on Resilience among Military Personnel Deployed in Joint Task Force Operations in North West Nigeria

Predictor Variable	R	R ²	Df	F	β	T	Sig.
Constant	.992	.984	5,379	4811.891		2.460	.014
Extraversion					.967	67.057	.000
Agreeableness					.048	2.229	.026
Conscientiousness					.005	.195	.845
Neuroticism					-.014	-.615	.539
Openness					-.022	-1.204	.229

The results in Table 4.2 revealed that the regression model containing the personality traits of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness significantly predicted resilience among military personnel deployed in Joint Task Force operations in North West Nigeria, [$R = .992$, $R^2 = .984$, $F(5,379) = 4811.891$, $p < .01$]. The model produced a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .992 and an R^2 value of .984, indicating that approximately 98.4% of the variance in resilience was explained by the combined influence of the personality traits.

The coefficients table further showed that Extraversion ($\beta = .967$, $t = 67.057$, $p < .001$) and Agreeableness ($\beta = .048$, $t = 2.229$, $p < .05$) significantly predicted resilience among military personnel. However, Conscientiousness ($\beta = .005$, $t = .195$, $p = .845$), Neuroticism ($\beta = -.014$, $t = -.615$, $p = .539$), and Openness ($\beta = -.022$, $t = -1.204$, $p = .229$) did not significantly predict resilience. This implies that military personnel with higher levels of extraversion and agreeableness were more likely to demonstrate higher resilience during Joint Task Force operations.

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression Showing the Influence of Coping Strategies on Resilience among Military Personnel Deployed in Joint Task Force Operations in North West Nigeria

Predictor Variable	R	R ²	Df	F	β	T	Sig.
Constant	.982	.964	3,381	3419.207	–	16.533	.000
Problem-focused Coping					.865	89.079	.000
Emotion-focused Coping					.407	7.123	.000
Avoidance Coping					.023	.410	.682

The results in Table 2 showed that the regression model containing coping strategies significantly predicted resilience among military personnel deployed in Joint Task Force operations in North West Nigeria, $R = .982$, $R^2 = .964$, $F(3,381) = 3419.207$, $p < .001$. The model produced a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .982 and a coefficient of determination (R^2) of .964, indicating that approximately 96.4% of the variance in resilience was explained by the combined influence of coping strategies. The coefficients table further revealed that problem-focused coping significantly predicted psychological resilience ($\beta = .865$, $t = 89.079$, $p < .001$). This indicates that an increase in the use of problem-focused coping strategies is associated with a significant increase in psychological resilience among military personnel.

Similarly, emotion-focused coping was found to be a significant positive predictor of psychological resilience ($\beta = .407$, $t = 7.123$, $p < .001$). This finding implies that military personnel who effectively utilize emotion-focused coping strategies are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of psychological resilience during Joint Task Force operations. However, avoidance coping did not significantly predict psychological resilience ($\beta = .023$, $t = .410$, $p = .682$). Since the probability value is greater than the .05 level of significance, avoidance coping did not make a statistically significant contribution to the prediction of psychological resilience after controlling for the other coping strategies.

Table 3: Summary of Multiple Regression Showing the Influence of Coping Strategies and Personality Traits on Resilience among Military Personnel Deployed in Joint Task Force Operations in North West Nigeria

Predictor Variable	R	R ²	Df	F	β	T	Sig.
Constant	.992	.984	8,376	2984.607	–	2.183	.030
Extraversion					.992	7.628	.000
Agreeableness					.057	1.561	.119
Conscientiousness					-.002	-.031	.976
Neuroticism					-.040	-.496	.620
Openness					-.031	-.675	.500
Problem-focused Coping					-.026	-.186	.853
Emotion-focused Coping					.008	.112	.911

Predictor Variable	R	R ²	Df	F	β	T	Sig.
Avoidance Coping					.004	.101	.919

The results in Table 4.4 revealed that the regression model containing coping strategies and personality traits significantly predicted resilience among military personnel deployed in Joint Task Force operations in North West Nigeria, [$R = .992$, $R^2 = .984$, $F(8,376) = 2984.607$, $p < .001$]. The model yielded a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .992 and an R^2 value of .984, indicating that approximately 98.4% of the variance in resilience was explained by the combined influence of coping strategies and personality traits. The coefficients table further revealed that Extraversion significantly predicted psychological resilience ($\beta = .992$, $t = 7.628$, $p < .001$), indicating that military personnel with higher levels of extraversion were more likely to exhibit higher levels of psychological resilience during Joint Task Force operations. However, Agreeableness ($\beta = .057$, $t = 1.561$, $p = .119$), Conscientiousness ($\beta = -.002$, $t = -.031$, $p = .976$), Neuroticism ($\beta = -.040$, $t = -.496$, $p = .620$), Openness ($\beta = -.031$, $t = -.675$, $p = .500$), Problem-focused coping ($\beta = -.026$, $t = -.186$, $p = .853$), Emotion-focused coping ($\beta = .008$, $t = .112$, $p = .911$), and Avoidance coping ($\beta = .004$, $t = .101$, $p = .919$) did not significantly predict psychological resilience because their probability values exceeded the .05 level of significance.

Discussion

The present study examined the predictive roles of the Big Five personality traits and coping strategies in explaining resilience among military personnel deployed in Joint Task Force Operations in Northwest Nigeria. Guided by the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), the study demonstrated that both personality traits and coping strategies significantly explained resilience. Specifically, Extraversion and Agreeableness significantly predicted resilience when personality variables were considered independently, while problem-focused and emotion-focused coping significantly predicted resilience among the coping variables. However, when personality traits and coping strategies were entered simultaneously, only Extraversion remained a significant predictor, suggesting that it represents the most robust psychological characteristic associated with resilience among military personnel operating in high-risk environments. The finding that Extraversion was the strongest predictor of resilience is consistent with both the theoretical assumptions of the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping and contemporary resilience research. Individuals high in extraversion are generally characterised by optimism, sociability, positive affect, and a tendency to seek interpersonal support, all of which facilitate adaptive responses to stressful situations. These characteristics are particularly valuable in military settings where teamwork, cohesion, and effective communication are essential for both operational success and psychological adjustment. Recent studies have similarly identified extraversion as one of the most consistent personality correlates of resilience across military and other high-risk occupational populations (Burtäverde et al., 2021; Masten, 2023). Within the Nigerian military context, where personnel are frequently exposed to insurgency, armed banditry, prolonged deployments, and unpredictable operational demands (Aina et al., 2023; Musa & Heineken, 2022), socially engaged and emotionally positive individuals may be better positioned to mobilise available support resources and maintain adaptive functioning despite repeated exposure to adversity.

Agreeableness also significantly predicted resilience when examined independently but lost significance after coping strategies were included in the combined model. This finding suggests that although cooperative, trusting, and empathetic individuals tend to demonstrate greater resilience, the influence of agreeableness may overlap with adaptive coping processes. Military personnel who are agreeable are more likely to maintain supportive interpersonal relationships, cooperate effectively with team members, and seek assistance during stressful situations, behaviours that enhance resilience within military units. The disappearance of its independent contribution in the combined model indicates that some of the protective influence of agreeableness may operate through the coping strategies individuals adopt rather than through the personality trait alone. Although this mechanism was not directly tested in the present study, it is consistent with the proposition of the Transactional Model that personality shapes stress appraisal and

coping responses, which subsequently influence adaptation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Contrary to expectations, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness did not significantly predict resilience. Previous studies have frequently reported conscientiousness as a positive predictor of resilience because conscientious individuals are typically organised, disciplined, and goal-directed (Burtăverde et al., 2021; Oshio et al., 2018). However, the structured and highly regulated nature of military operations may reduce the extent to which individual differences in conscientiousness influence adaptation, as operational activities are largely guided by established procedures and command structures. Similarly, the absence of a significant association between neuroticism and resilience differs from findings in civilian populations, where neuroticism is consistently linked to poorer psychological adjustment. One possible explanation is that military selection, training, and continuous exposure to demanding operational environments may reduce the observable influence of emotional instability on resilience by fostering emotional regulation and psychological preparedness among personnel. Likewise, openness to experience may be less relevant within operational contexts that prioritise discipline, procedural compliance, and coordinated action over novelty and experimentation. These findings suggest that the influence of personality traits on resilience may vary according to occupational context and organisational culture.

The findings further demonstrated that coping strategies significantly predicted resilience. Problem-focused coping emerged as the strongest coping predictor, indicating that military personnel who actively address operational challenges, seek practical solutions, and engage in deliberate problem-solving are more likely to maintain psychological resilience. This finding aligns with the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which proposes that adaptive coping facilitates successful adjustment following stressful experiences (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It also supports recent Nigerian evidence showing that adaptive coping strategies contribute positively to psychological functioning among military personnel and other populations exposed to chronic stress (Adegbesan & Ofule, 2023). In operational environments characterised by uncertainty, security threats, and prolonged deployments, problem-focused coping may increase perceptions of control and self-efficacy, thereby strengthening resilience. Emotion-focused coping also significantly predicted resilience, suggesting that effective emotional regulation represents another important protective factor for military personnel. Unlike common misconceptions that emotion-focused coping is inherently maladaptive, contemporary resilience research recognises that adaptive emotion regulation, acceptance, positive reframing, and appropriate emotional expression are beneficial when stressors cannot be immediately changed. Military personnel deployed in conflict environments often encounter situations beyond their direct control; consequently, the ability to regulate emotional responses may become essential for maintaining psychological stability. This finding reinforces recent evidence that resilience depends not only on solving operational problems but also on effectively managing the emotional consequences of prolonged exposure to adversity (Masten, 2023).

Avoidance coping did not significantly predict resilience. Although avoidance strategies may temporarily reduce emotional distress, they generally fail to resolve underlying stressors and may impede long-term psychological adjustment. Military organisations typically encourage active engagement with operational demands through teamwork, discipline, and structured problem-solving, which may reduce reliance on avoidant responses. Consequently, avoidance coping appears to offer limited value for promoting resilience among personnel operating in high-risk military environments. When personality traits and coping strategies were examined together, only Extraversion remained a significant predictor of resilience. This finding suggests that the influence of coping strategies may partly overlap with broader personality characteristics, particularly those associated with sociability, optimism, and proactive engagement. Individuals high in extraversion are generally more likely to utilise adaptive coping strategies, access social support, and maintain positive interpersonal relationships, all of which contribute to resilience. Although the present study did not formally examine mediation or moderation, the findings indicate that personality and coping should not be considered in isolation, as they appear to interact in shaping psychological adaptation. Future research employing structural equation modelling or longitudinal designs may provide greater insight into these underlying mechanisms.

The present study contributes to the limited body of evidence on resilience among Nigerian military personnel. Much of the existing resilience literature has been generated within Western military populations, despite substantial differences in operational environments, organisational structures, and security

challenges. By focusing on personnel deployed in Joint Task Force Operations in Northwest Nigeria, the study provides context-specific evidence regarding the psychological characteristics associated with resilience under conditions of persistent insurgency and armed banditry (Aina et al., 2023; Elechi & Ohazuruike, 2024; Musa & Heineken, 2022). The findings also provide empirical support for the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by demonstrating that resilience reflects the combined influence of relatively stable personality characteristics and adaptive coping processes. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that resilience-building programmes within the Nigerian Armed Forces should prioritise the development of adaptive coping skills while recognising the important role of personality characteristics, particularly extraversion. Pre-deployment and in-service psychological training should incorporate structured problem-solving, emotional regulation, peer support, and stress management interventions that strengthen adaptive responses to operational stress. Such programmes may enhance psychological readiness, reduce vulnerability to combat-related stress, and improve overall operational effectiveness among military personnel deployed in conflict environments.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this study have important theoretical and practical implications for understanding and promoting resilience among military personnel deployed in high-risk operational environments. The study provides empirical support for the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by demonstrating that both personality traits and coping strategies contribute to resilience. However, the finding that only extraversion remained a significant predictor when all variables were considered simultaneously suggests that certain personality characteristics may have a stronger and more direct influence on resilience than specific coping strategies. This indicates that resilience among military personnel is shaped by both stable individual characteristics and adaptive behavioural responses to stress. The findings also suggest that the influence of personality on resilience may vary depending on the operational context, highlighting the need for future studies to examine factors such as combat exposure, leadership quality, and unit cohesion that may strengthen or weaken these relationships.

The findings provide clear directions for military policy and psychological support programmes. First, resilience-building initiatives within the Nigerian Armed Forces should place greater emphasis on strengthening adaptive coping skills, particularly problem-solving and emotional regulation, during pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment training. These competencies can improve personnel's ability to manage operational stress and recover from adverse experiences. Routine psychological assessments should be incorporated into personnel development programmes to identify individuals who may be more vulnerable to operational stress. Rather than using personality assessments solely for recruitment or selection, they should inform targeted resilience interventions, mentoring, and psychological support for personnel who may require additional assistance. Commanders and military psychologists should strengthen peer-support systems and unit cohesion, as social connectedness appears to be an important protective factor for resilience. Structured peer mentoring, team-building activities, and leadership practices that encourage trust, communication, and mutual support may enhance psychological adjustment during deployments. Finally, resilience training should discourage maladaptive coping behaviours, particularly avoidance, while promoting active coping approaches that encourage personnel to address operational challenges constructively and regulate emotional responses effectively.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between personality traits, coping strategies, and resilience. The use of self-report measures may also have introduced social desirability bias, particularly within the military setting where personnel may underreport psychological difficulties or maladaptive coping behaviours. The sample consisted almost entirely of male personnel deployed in Joint Task Force operations in Northwest Nigeria, limiting the generalisability of the findings to female military personnel, other military branches, or different operational environments. In addition, the study did not assess important operational factors such as combat exposure, deployment history, or operational stress, which may influence resilience and the effectiveness of coping strategies.

The study examined personality traits and coping strategies as independent predictors without exploring possible interaction effects between them. Furthermore, the brief personality inventory used resulted in relatively low reliability for some personality dimensions, which may have reduced the ability to detect significant relationships. Finally, mental health outcomes such as post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and depression were not assessed, limiting a broader understanding of how resilience relates to psychological wellbeing. Future studies should employ longitudinal designs, include more diverse military populations, incorporate objective and multi-source assessments, measure operational stress and mental health outcomes, and utilise more comprehensive personality instruments to provide a deeper understanding of resilience among military personnel.

Conclusion

This study provides evidence that both personality traits and coping strategies predict resilience among Nigerian military personnel deployed in Joint Task Force operations in Northwest Nigeria. Specifically, Extraversion and Agreeableness emerged as significant personality predictors of resilience, while problem-focused and emotion-focused coping also contributed positively to resilience. When both sets of predictors were considered simultaneously, Extraversion was the only significant predictor, suggesting that its effect may operate through coping processes. Avoidance coping did not significantly predict resilience, consistent with theoretical expectations. The findings extend the existing body of research on military resilience to the Nigerian context and support the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of personality assessment, coping skills training, and social support interventions in promoting psychological resilience among military personnel. Future research should address the limitations of this study and continue to examine the complex interplay between personality, coping, and resilience in military contexts. Such research is essential for developing effective, evidence-based interventions to support military personnel and mitigate the negative psychological effects of combat exposure and operational stress.

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