

# Beyond the Battlefield: Analysing Personal Life Expectations as a Moderator of Fear of Happiness and Workload in the Search for Military Personnel's Peace of Mind

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## Abstract

Our study presents a robust moderation analysis that explores the impact of personal life expectations on fear of terrorism, workload, and peace of mind among military personnel. The analysis provides a clearer understanding of the relationship between these variables and sheds light on the factors that contribute to the peace of mind of military personnel. Data was collected with four instruments: the Peace of Mind Scale, the Fear of Terrorism Scale, the Workload Scale, and the Personal Life Expectations Scale. These participants, aged 19–58 ( $M = 38.31$ ;  $SD = 8.83$ ), were purposefully and conveniently sampled. The results show that fear of terrorism, workload, and personal life expectations negatively influenced peace of mind. Also, the result shows that personal life expectations significantly shape soldiers' responses to fear of terrorism, influencing their peace of mind. Positive personal outlooks are linked to increased resilience and improved peace of mind, even in the face of external stressors. However, the moderating effect is inconsistent across all individuals, highlighting the intricate interplay of factors influencing soldiers' peace of mind and mental well-being. These findings have implications for military support systems, underscoring the need for tailored interventions recognising individual differences and personal expectations. This study offers a greater understanding of soldiers' expectations and peace of mind experiences dealing with fear and workload pressures within the Nigerian military, with broader relevance for comparable settings worldwide. The study also provides suggestions for further studies with other implications and limitations.

**Keywords:** *Fear of Terrorism, Mental Well-Being, Peace of Mind, Personal Life Expectations, Soldiers, Workload.*

## INTRODUCTION

According to research by Harwood-Gross et al. (2022), the peace of mind significantly influences the performance of conscripts, short-service, and professional soldiers. It has a profound impact on their mental and physical well-being (Armstrong et al., 2023), operational effectiveness (Tegern et al., 2022), morale, and overall health (Onyishi et al., 2026), and peace of mind. Similarly, the acts of terrorism in various locations, carried out by organisations like Al-Qaeda and ISIS, and Boko Haram have caused public concern and uncertainty (Okafor et al., 2024), resulting in changes in workload and personal expectations for citizens and soldiers alike (Israel Ministry of Defence, 2021, Onyishi et al., 2026) and influencing professional soldiers peace of mind. The actions of extremist groups driven by various motives have taken a toll on their emotional intelligence (Okafor et al., 2024), psychological health (Ujoatuonu et al., 2023), and peace of mind.

Also, Nigeria, one of the West African countries where the current study participants (professional soldiers) were sampled from, faces diverse security challenges, such as uprisings, terrorism, banditry, and communal clashes (Onyishi et al., 2026), affecting citizens' and soldiers' peace of mind. The rise of Boko Haram, Fulani Banditry, and Unknown Gunmen has created a sense of fear among their professional soldiers (Ujoatuonu et al., 2020a) and an unpleasant peace of mind. Nigeria's defense organisation does not enlist conscript soldiers but only professionals who regularly operate under highly stressful conditions (Okafor et al., 2024), putting them at risk of trauma and making life-or-death decisions (Ujoatuonu et al., 2023). Such experiences can negatively impact their mental health, ushering in conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and emotional instability (Ben-David & Cohen-Louck, 2010). Many professional soldiers have expended the supreme cost, losing their lives in the line of duty (Martin et al., 2020), significantly impacting the peace of mind of surviving personnel. As a result, the peace of mind of surviving personnel is often compromised, adversely affecting their psychological resilience, job satisfaction (Van Der Does et al., 2021), and ability to maintain healthy relationships within and outside the military (Castro & Adler, 1999).

Peace of mind for soldiers encompasses their psychological well-being (Lee et al., 2013), emotional stability, and sense of security (Saputra et al., 2023). It entails the absence of excessive stress (Harwood-Gross et al., 2022) and the availability of mental health resources (Smith et al., 2008). It also involves balancing professional responsibilities (Ujoatuonu et al., 2023) and personal life (Blevins et al., 2019), fostering happiness and self-confidence in their operations (Baum et al., 2013). Essentially, Nigerian military personnel's peace of mind might apply to cognitive and emotional well-being, where they feel protected, supported, and unrestrained from marked stress or anxiety (Okafor et al., 2024).

Fear of terrorism is advanced in the current research as a variable that might sway Nigerian military personnel's peace of mind. Fear of terrorism is the psychological reaction to the perceived threat of terrorist activities (Sarwar et al., 2020), leading to worry (Dinesen & Jæger, 2013), trepidation (Bisson et al., 2021), and distress (Malik et al., 2018). In the defence organisation, the fear of terrorism might notably impact soldiers' peace of mind, as it initiates diverse psychological and emotional issues (Smith et al., 2008). For example, soldiers who work in terrorism-affected vicinities are persistently aware of the danger that terrorist actions may create (Sharma, 2015). The sensitive sense of menace and the need to continue being watchful can amplify stress, anxiety, and hypervigilance (Stankov, 2018) and lessen their peace of mind. This unvarying state of watchfulness can upset their peace of mind, making it complicated for them to loosen up or experiences ease (Van Der Does et al., 2021). Similarly, the fear of terrorism can evoke concerns about personal safety and the safety of their comrades (Sharma, 2015). Soldiers may worry about potential attacks, ambushes, or encounters with improvised explosive devices (IEDs) (Martin et al., 2020).

To solve the fear of terrorism, professional soldiers in challenging work environments get involved in excess jobs, which increase their workload (Vasquez et al., 2022).

Nigerian soldiers are professionals that operate in a challenging environment with diverse security threats and operational demands (Ujoatuonu et al., 2023). Understanding the background of their workload provides insight into the nature and complexity of their responsibilities (Ujoatuonu et al., 2020a). In similar defence organisations, frequent deployments and operational demands increase the workload on soldiers, leaving limited time for rest, recovery (Achshyan et al., 2022), and personal life for sound peace of mind. This cycle

can perpetuate chronic stress and exhaustion, decreasing morale and efficiency (Halvarsson et al., 2018) and influencing their peace of mind. In addition, inadequate access to mental health resources, the stigma surrounding seeking help, and limited mental health awareness contribute to soldiers' mental health issues (Tegern et al., 2022). Insufficient support systems might exacerbate their peace of mind challenges and impede their cognitive performance, well-being, and emotional responses (Kallinen & Gylden, 2022).

No single variable can account for 100% of an outcome in analysis. Instead, multiple variables contribute to explaining behaviour. Rather than focusing only on a linear link between variables, we examined potential explanatory factors, including moderators, such as personal life expectations. According to Broom et al. (2020), personal life expectations include an individual's beliefs, hopes, and standards regarding their future and personal achievements. These expectations cover various domains, such as career, relationships, goals, desires, personal growth, lifestyles, and perceived potential in different areas of life (Lee et al., 2013). According to Saputra et al. (2023), they may include conscious aspirations, such as setting specific career objectives, or unconscious anticipations, such as expecting fulfilment in relationships without proactive planning. Soldiers' personal life expectations refer to their beliefs, hopes, and aspirations regarding their personal lives outside of their military duties (Berndtsson & Österberg, 2023). Significantly, these expectations often influence an individual's decision-making and strategic planning (Schilz & Sammito, 2023). Besides, personal life expectations can sway include relationships, family, work-life balance (Baum et al., 2013), stability, and well-being (Kuhnert et al., 2017). For example, military personnel's life expectations include their need for meaningful relationships (Sammito, 2023), support from significant others (Calhoun, 2012), and nurturing family life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2012). It is essential to recognise that these expectations can vary widely based on individual circumstances (Adler et al., 2009). It may evolve as soldiers gain more experience during different phases of their military careers (Stankov, 2018).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Asad et al. (2018), military personnel have been required to adapt to new challenges, personal expectations, and workloads to attain a state of tranquillity in the face of these disturbances. According to recent studies (e.g., Brom et al., 2020; Harwood-Gross et al., 2022; Saputra et al., 2023; Okafor et al., 2024), military personnel's peace of mind is characterised by solid support and camaraderie. It involves mental health (Baum et al., 2013), work-life balance (Kantorowicz et al., 2021), operational readiness (Van Der Does et al., 2021), and supportive relationships (Saputra et al., 2023). According to Baum et al. (2013), achieving peace of mind requires addressing mental needs and ensuring a healthy work environment. Studies (e.g., Brom et al., 2020; Harwood-Gross., 2022; Kantorowicz et al., 2021; Saputra et al., 2023; Van Der Does et al., 2021) have revealed that factors influencing peace of mind include defence policies and work climate, fear of terrorism, combat exposure with experience, workload, and soldiers' personal life expectations. This fear can create constant apprehension and contribute to heightened anxiety levels, impacting their peace of mind during operations and in their personal lives (Ujoatuonu et al., 2020a).

Fear of terrorism can impact military personnel's well-being (Kantorowicz et al., 2023), including physical (Castro & Adler, 1999), psychological health (Sharma, 2015), and peace of mind. According to Brendtsson and Österberg (2023), fear of terrorism may likewise dislocate military personnel's peace of mind, own lives, affairs, and capability to survive through the

burdens of insecurity face-offs, terrorism, and other armed forces services. It also influences their preparedness (De Clercq et al., 2017), judgment (Tegern et al., 2022), and performance in counterterrorism operations (Israel Ministry of Defense, 2021). Studies (e.g., Castro & Adler, 1999; Hollands et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2008) have shown that the fear of terrorism among military personnel can manifest in various ways, including ethical and moral dilemmas, concerns about civilian casualties, and undermining trust and teamwork. However, the audience can take confidence in the fact that comprehensive strategies such as mental support, proper training (Forbes et al., 2019), effective risk management (Dinesen & Jæger, 2013), and a supportive unit environment (Hollands et al., 2019) have proven to be highly effective in alleviating apprehension, managing stress, and building resilience (Okafor et al., 2024). On those basics we hypothesised that:

**Hypothesis 1:** Fear of terrorism will negatively predict peace of mind of Nigerian military personnel.

Nigerian professional soldiers' activities or job descriptions that trigger workload include patrols (Chatterjee et al., 2022), combat operations (Kallinen & Gylden, 2022), peacekeeping efforts (Halvarsson et al., 2018), and training exercises (Ujoatuonu et al., 2019). Overburdened soldiers may experience reduced performance and compromised decision-making abilities (Achshyan et al., 2022). Due to the challenges they face, addressing soldiers' workload and peace of mind is crucial. Prioritising soldiers' well-being and providing adequate support can reduce their workload and enhance their peace of mind, job satisfaction, and retention rates. Based on this, researchers (e.g., Achshyan et al., 2022; Bekesiene et al., 2023; Schilz & Sammito, 2023) suggested that workload might influence the peace of mind of military personnel. On those basics, we hypothesised that:

**Hypothesis 2:** Workload will negatively predict peace of mind of Nigerian military personnel

Suggestions from recent studies (e.g., Achshyan et al., 2022; Berndtson & Osterberg, 2023; Brom et al., 2020; Fornasin & Freni, 2023; Knežević et al., 2016) state that personal life expectations may influence the relationship between fear of terrorism, workload, and peace of mind. According to recent studies (e.g., Tegern et al., 2022; Van Der Does et al., 2021; Ujoatuonu et al., 2019; 2023; US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Defense, 2021), military personnel strive to balance their duties and personal lives, seeking stability and support. Various factors, including upbringing (Wong et al., 2020), experiences (Sharma, 2015), and the demands of military service (Smith et al., 2008), shape their expectations. Cultural values (Martin et al., 2020), military culture (Okafor et al., 2024), rigorous training (Berndtsson & Österberg, 2023), deployment (Baum et al., 2013), and access to support systems (Peng et al., 2020) all influence their personal life expectations.

**Hypothesis 3:** Personal life expectations will negatively predict peace of mind of Nigerian military personnel

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

Janis and Feshbach's (1953) Threat Appraisal Theory helps us understand the connection between soldiers' fear of terrorism, workload, personal life expectations, and peace of mind. According to this theory, individuals assess threats based on their perceived severity and vulnerability. This theory contends that soldiers' perceptions of the seriousness and vulnerability of terrorist threats, their workload, and their expectations for their personal lives all have an impact on their state of mind. If soldiers see these factors as severe threats, it

increases their fear and decreases their peace of mind. Conversely, feeling well-prepared and protected, with less workload and personal life expectations, enhances their peace of mind. For Nigerian soldiers fighting terrorism, threat appraisal theory can help shed light on their perception of terrorism and how they respond. The theory suggests that individuals engage in two cognitive processes when appraising threats: evaluating the severity of the threat and assessing their ability to cope with it (Hanar et al., 2019). Nigerian soldiers may perceive the threat of terrorism, workload, and altered personal life expectations associated with curbing this menace as severe due to the high levels of violence and attacks by groups like Boko Haram. This constant exposure to danger, witnessing acts of violence, and experiencing personal losses can lead to heightened fear and anxiety (Ujoatuonu et al., 2019). Soldiers' coping abilities and support in countering terrorism (Malik et al., 2018) might be crucial to their peace of mind. Individual differences in threat appraisal, prior trauma exposure (Harwood-Gross et al., 2022), personal resilience, social support networks (Ujoatuonu et al., 2020a), and cultural beliefs can shape how soldiers appraise and cope with threats (Sarwar et al., 2020). Strategies based on threat appraisal theory, such as providing comprehensive training and resources and fostering a supportive and cohesive military culture (Malik et al., 2018), can help address soldiers' fear of terrorism, workload, and personal life expectations while promoting peace of mind.

**Hypothesis 4:** Personal life expectation will moderate the relationship between fear of terrorism and peace of mind Nigerian military personnel.

**Hypothesis 5:** Personal life expectation will moderate the relationship between workload and peace of mind Nigerian military personnel.

## METHOD

### Participants

The participants in this study comprised 440 Nigerian combatant army personnel, conveniently and purposefully sampled from Nigeria, West Africa, and their ages ranged from 19 to 58 years ( $M = 38.31$  years;  $SD = 8.83$ ). Also, we obtained institutional ethical approval from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Researchers sought the participants' informed consent by requesting them to mark a box indicating their agreement to participate in the study. Other demographic variables such as ethnicity, religion, and gender were not sampled because, in the Nigerian military, they assume there is nothing like gender. Therefore, all genders are the same. As for ethnicity and religion, we were asked to remove them before distribution. The justification is that the defence organisation believes that ethnicity and religion are what cause the country's security issues. In addition, the defence ministry aims to reunite Nigerian soldiers who are now split along that line.

### Instruments

#### *Peace of Mind Scale*

The Peace of Mind Scale (PoMS), developed by Lee et al. (2013), measured how often participants experienced inner peace and harmony daily. The scale consists of 7 and sample items (e.g., "I have peace and harmony in my mind"). Of the overall seven items, only two items are reverse-scored. The items are ranked on a hierarchy from 1 (not at all) to 5 (all of the time), and the norm of the item scores mirrors a general measurement of peace of mind. Lee et al. (2013) obtained satisfactory internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of .91. We conducted a pilot study to validate the Peace of Mind Scale by Lee et al. (2013) for the present

study on a sample of 105 soldiers and the items yielded acceptable internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of .74.

### ***Fear of Terrorism Scale***

The Fear of Terrorism Scale is a seven-item questionnaire developed by Boscarino et al. (2003) to measure individual levels of concern and thoughts about terrorists attacking with biological (such as smallpox or anthrax), nuclear, and clerical weapons and fear of encountering and experiencing a terrorist attack. Sample items include: "I am concerned about a major terrorist attack occurring around me." The items on the questionnaire are measured on a five-point Likert-type scale varying from 1 = not concerned at all to 5 = very concerned. A high score (i.e., 20 and above shows) high concerns and fear of future attacks, while (below 20 shows) low concerns and fear of future attacks. Boscarino et al. (2003) obtained an excellent Cronbach alpha  $\alpha$  of .92. We conducted a pilot study to validate the Fear of Terrorism Scale by Boscarino et al. (2003) for the present study on a sample of 105 soldiers, and the items yielded acceptable internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of .85.

### ***Workload Scale***

The workload scale was developed by Swarnalatha (2013) to measure how the workload (such as jobs they cannot handle comfortably, an increase in responsibilities at work, taking too many tasks at full stretch, and coming up with new ideas to get appreciated in the organization creates more pressure) of employees keep them away from their family. The instrument is an 11-item questionnaire scored on a five-point Likert rating format (1= Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree), so low scores indicate low workload. In contrast, high scores indicated high levels of workload. Representative items include: "Coming up with new ideas to get appreciated in the organization creates work pressure"; "My responsibility at work increases my workload." Swarnalatha (2013) obtained acceptable internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of .83. We conducted a pilot study to validate the Workload Scale by Swarnalatha (2013) for the present research on a sample of 105 soldiers and the items yielded acceptable internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of .89.

### ***Personal Life Expectation Scale***

The Personal Life Expectation Scale, a unique 18-item measure developed by Yigerem (2017), is designed to assess various aspects of an individual's daily life. These aspects include the time allocated for relaxation, exercise, and sleep at night, the ability to have breakfast without rushing, the opportunity to go on vacation and spend quality time with family and significant others, and the importance of celebrating significant days like birthdays. The scale is responded to on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1=Very Strongly Agree (VSA) to 7=Very Strongly Disagree (VSD). Sample items include: "I need to relax for a minimum of 2 hours per day." Yigerem (2017) obtained a Cronbach's Alpha of .84. We conducted a pilot study to validate the Personal Life Expectation Scale by Yigerem (2017) for the present research on a sample of 105 soldiers and the items yielded acceptable internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of .77.

### **Procedures**

An ethical clearance letter to conduct this study was obtained from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Institutional ethical approval and informed consent were obtained for the present study since they confirmed the absence of a psychological services centre and a psychologist. The defence organisation's public relations officer directed us to the appropriate

office as the Commanding Officer (i.e., their commandant, as fondly called) for approval and the study to be conducted. After the authorisation to conduct the study, respondents were assured the confidentiality of their responses. After that, all the available participants volunteered to participate in the study. Each barracks also assigned some officers to assist in distributing and collecting the completed copies of the questionnaires. The participants were given ten minutes to complete the copies of questionnaires during their break periods or after morning debriefings. Completed copies of the instruments were retrieved from the respondents, and verbal gratitude and appreciation were expressed to the participants for completing the questionnaires.

**Design/Statistics**

The study adopted a cross-sectional design, pearson’s correlation analysis was conducted among the study’s demographic and dependent variables, while the model 1 of Hayes’ (2018) regression-based process were be applied for hypotheses testing. The correlations were used in this study to ascertain how the demographic variables will be bivariately related to the major variables of the study (fear of terrorism, workload, personal life expectations, and military personnel peace of mind).

**RESULTS**

**Table 1: Correlations of demographic variables and statistics among the study variables**

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Age	38.31	8.83	-							
2.Type of employment	1.78	.80	.02	-						
3.Years of service	1.68	.83	-.03	.12*	-					
4.Marital status	1.69	.46	-.01	-.10*	.30**	-				
5.Fear of terrorism	27.77	5.88	-.06	-.01	-.08	-.02	-			
6.Workload	18.57	5.55	-.02	-.03	.05	.08	-.09*	-		
7.PLEExpectations	32.61	7.54	.03	-.01	.14**	.02	.06	.03	-	
8.Peace of mind	21.79	5.96	.03	.09	.15**	.04	-.14**	-.11*	-.12*	-

*Note:* N = 440, \* = p < .05 (two-tailed), \*\*\* = p < .01 (two-tailed). M=Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, PLEExpectations = personal life expectations

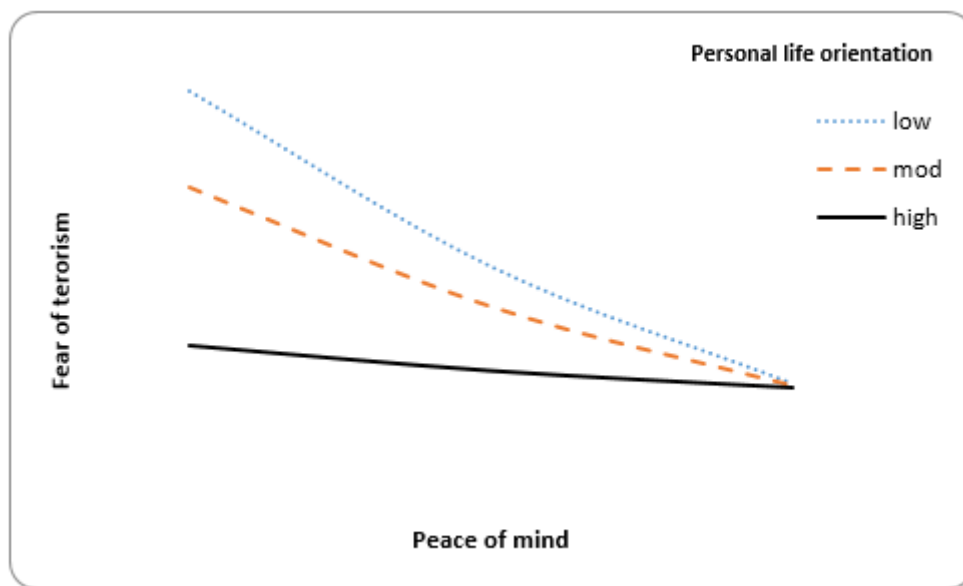
In Table 1, years of service ( $r = .15, p < .01$ ) correlate with peace of mind, while other demographic variables did not. Meanwhile, the study added demographic variables as controls to help checkmate the criterion variables. Among the criterion variables, fear of terrorism ( $r = -.14, p < .01$ ), workload ( $r = -.11, p < .01$ ), and personal life expectations ( $r = -.12, p < .01$ ) equally correlate with peace of mind.

**Table 2: Hayes PROCESS Macro results for moderating role of personal life expectations in the associations of fear of terrorism and peace of mind among Nigerian military personnel**

Variables	β	SE	t	95%CL			
				LLCI	ULCI	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	ΔF
Fear of terrorism (FT)	-.15	.05	-3.09**		-.24	-.05	
Personal life expectations (PLE)	-.09	.04	-2.32*		-.16	-.01	
FT X PLO	.01	.01	2.13*	.00	.03	.04	6.45**

*Note:* \* = p ≤ .05, \*\* = p ≤ .01, β = Regression Coefficient; SE = Standard Error; t = population t value; p = Probability Level; LLCI and ULCI = Lower and Upper Limit Confident Interval; ΔR<sup>2</sup>Adjusted R square

In Table 2, the result depicts that fear of terrorism negatively predicts peace of mind ( $\beta = -.15, p < .01$ ), indicating that for every one unit rise in fear of terrorism, peace of mind decreases by -.15 unit. Personal life expectations negatively predict peace of mind ( $\beta = -.09, p < .05$ ), indicating that for every one-unit rise in personal life expectations, peace of mind decreases by -.09 unit. The interaction effect between fear of terrorism and personal life expectations on peace of mind was significant ( $\beta = .01, p < .05$ ) and thus showed that personal life expectations moderated the relationship between fear of terrorism and peace of mind. See Figure 1, the slope of the interaction, which indicated that fear of terrorism significantly relates to peace of mind for those with low personal life expectations ( $\beta = -7.62, p < .01$ ), moderate personal life orientation ( $\beta = -1.62, p < .01$ ), but not for those with high personal life expectations. The  $R^2$  for the model was .04, indicating that these variables explained a 4% variance in peace of mind among Nigerian military personnel.



**Figure 2: Interaction slope showing moderating role of personal life expectations in the associations of fear of terrorism, and peace of mind among Nigerian military personnel**

**Table 3: Hayes PROCESS Macro results for moderating role of personal life expectations in the associations of workload, and peace of mind among Nigerian military personnel**

Variables	$\beta$	SE	t	95%CL			
				LLCI	ULCI	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$
Workload	-.12	.05	-2.36*	-.22	-.02		
Personal life expectations (PLE)	-.09	.04	-2.43*	-.16	-.02		
Workload X PLEs	.00	.01	.05	-.01	.01	.03	4.01*

**Note:** \* =  $p \leq .05$ , \*\* =  $p \leq .01$ ,  $\beta$  = Regression Coefficient; SE = Standard Error;  $t$  = population  $t$  value;  $p$  = Probability Level; LLCI and ULCI = Lower and Upper Limit Confident Interval;  $\Delta R^2$  Adjusted R square

In Table 2, the result revealed that workload negatively predicts peace of mind ( $\beta = -.12, p < .05$ ), indicating that for every unit rise in workload, peace of mind decreases by -.12 unit. Personal life expectations negatively predict peace of mind ( $\beta = -.09, p < .05$ ), indicating that for every one-unit rise in personal life expectations, peace of mind decreases by .09 unit. The interaction effect between workload and personal life expectations on peace of mind did not

produce any significant impact, indicating that personal life expectations did not moderate the relationship between workload and peace of mind. The  $R^2$  for the model was .03, indicating that the variables explained a 3% variance in peace of mind among Nigerian military personnel.

## DISCUSSION

Five hypotheses were postulated. Firstly, it was hypothesised that soldiers' fear of terrorism will negatively predict their peace of mind. The study findings showed that soldiers' fear of terrorism negatively predicted their peace of mind. That is, as fear of terrorism increases, peace of mind decreases. The finding is consistent with studies. For example, the Haner et al. (2019) study showed that gender, religiosity, and psychological despair were almost invariably associated with fear of terrorism and worry about being the prey of a terrorist invasion since terrorism-related fear and worry predict support for anti-Muslim policies. Also, Malik et al. (2018) have shown that individuals exposed to high levels of terrorism are more likely to exhibit avoidance behaviours due to fear than those with low levels of exposure. However, no significant differences were found between the effects of the perceived risk of terrorism on fear and avoidance behaviours. These findings suggest that exposure to continuous terrorism may partially sensitise individuals to the threat. In addition, Ben-David and Cohen-Louck's (2010) study showed that the ultimate goal of fear of terrorism is to cause fear, anxiety, helplessness, and vulnerability among the general population, which affects people's capability to cope with the threat.

Second, it was hypothesised that workload will negatively predict peace of mind. The study findings showed that the workload of soldiers negatively predicted their peace of mind. That is, as workload increases, peace of mind decreases. The finding is consistent with studies. For example, Fornasin and Freni (2023) showed that workload significantly influenced the Italian military health service during the First World War. Armstrong et al. (2023) found that the cognitive performance of military personnel can be affected during long-duration loaded marching. Chatterjee et al. (2022) found that environmental heat and higher humidity probably increased mental workload, which led to adjustments to negotiate with natural obstacles like uneven terrain and slippery surfaces. Joyner (2006) found that performance decreases as workload increases.

Third, it was hypothesised that soldiers' personal life expectations would negatively predict their peace of mind. The study findings showed that soldiers' personal life expectations negatively predicted their peace of mind. That is, as personal life expectations increase, peace of mind decreases. The finding is consistent with studies. For example, Schilz and Sammito (2023) found that extra health-promoting bodily training schedules are not demanded for most of the soldiers but that, in contrast, affiliated offers for physical activity options, e.g., in the form of fitness kits, are urgently demanded in specific assignment areas (e.g., onboard ships) which influenced expectation. Soldiers face high-stress situations, life-threatening work situations, and death, and physical activity options can be used to promote health, stimulate bodily training schedules for aligning personal life expectations (Kanu et al., 2024), and enhance peace of mind. For example, improved cardiovascular health, muscle strength, flexibility, and overall physical fitness, better performance, lower obesity, diabetes, and heart disease in military duties reduce the risk of injury and death, providing a sense of security (Okafor et al., 2024) and enhancing peace of mind. Similarly, through goal-setting and achievement, self-esteem, a balanced lifestyle, and a sense of accomplishment, relaxation, mental clarity, a sense of routine, and stability might be boosted for increased life expectations

(Sharma, 2015) and less peace of mind. By embracing a holistic approach to physical fitness that incorporates diverse and engaging activities such as running, swimming, weightlifting, and team sports, military training programs have the power to significantly improve the overall health, life expectations (Smith et al., 2008), and peace of mind of soldiers. When soldiers engage in physical activity, their body releases endorphins, which are natural mood lifters (Tegern et al., 2022). This can promote a calmer state of mind and reduce feelings of stress and tension. As a result, this can lead to a more resilient, effective, and content military force (Amstrong et al., 2023).

Fourth, it was hypothesised that soldiers' personal life expectations will moderate the relationship between fear of terrorism and peace of mind. The study findings showed that soldiers' personal life expectations indeed moderated this relationship. For instance, soldiers who had high personal life expectations were found to be less affected by the fear of terrorism, maintaining a higher level of peace of mind. This finding is consistent with previous studies. For example, Berndtsson and Österberg (2023) found time-related effects to influence military deployments. Sarwar et al. (2020) showed that fear of terrorism is a positive and influential predictor of students' psychological distress, which is fully mediated by state negative affect, and emotional support also moderated the indirect mark of fear of terrorism on distress mediated by inimical affect. Asad et al. (2018) study demonstrated that emotional intelligence especially moderated the affinity between the fear of terrorism and the adolescents' psychological well-being.

Fifth, it was hypothesised that soldiers' personal life expectations will moderate the relationship between workload and peace of mind. The study findings showed that soldiers' personal life expectations did not moderate the relationship between fear of terrorism and their peace of mind. The findings needed to be more consistent with studies. For example, Vasquez et al. (2022) found that a higher workload had a significant relationship with Mirror in the Sky (MitS). Malhari et al. (2021) found that one hour of ICV operation increased cognitive workload and significantly decreased cognitive task performance. Internal temperature and RH of ICV are potential physical stress factors affecting the soldier's workload and performance. Halvarsson et al. (2018) found the need to develop strategies that match the soldiers' ability to their career needs with suitable and reasonable physical preference tests during the recruitment process and proactive interventions targeting MSCI before and during deployment to enhance soldiers' readiness and promote operational readiness. However, the findings are consistent with other studies. For example, Achsyan et al. (2022) found that workload cannot directly improve performance in the Navy. Kallinen and Gylden (2022) found that workload was significantly higher during non-continuous sound than during continuous and no-sound conditions.

The absence of an interaction effect between workload and personal life expectations on peace of mind could be explained by the Buffer Hypothesis or Buffering Effect Theory. According to the Buffer Hypothesis or Buffering Effect Theory, certain factors, in this case, personal life expectations, can act as buffers or protective factors that mitigate the negative impact of a stressor on an outcome. Once there is a buffering upshot, the buffer wanes the link connecting the stressor and the upshot, eventually leading to a fewer obvious or insignificant upshot.

Nevertheless, in the defence organisation state, the deficiency of an interaction upshot signifies that personal life expectations do not provide a buffer that modifies the link connecting workload and peace of mind. We used the Buffering Effect Theory to discuss how

personal life expectations were anticipated to wane the harmful brunt of workload on peace of mind. It is important to note that the absence of an interaction effect does not mean that personal life expectations do not influence peace of mind or that workload has no impact on peace of mind. It simply suggests that personal life expectations do not modify the strength or nature of the relationship between workload and peace of mind as expected. Ultimately, the Buffer Hypothesis or Buffering Effect Theory furnishes a hypothetical framework to illustrate why the anticipated moderation effect was not observed in the relationship between workload, personal life expectations, and peace of mind.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study result implies that first, fear of terrorism can significantly impact a soldier's well-being and peace of mind. The fear of terrorism significantly impacts soldiers' well-being by causing anxiety, stress, and hypervigilance. It erodes trust in society, leads to unease in public places, and can contribute to mental health disorders. Additionally, it can lead to security measures that infringe on civil liberties and economic instability. Constantly worrying about personal safety or the safety of loved ones can lead to chronic stress, affecting mental health and peace of mind. Terrorism often targets public places such as airports, shopping centres, and public transportation, causing unease and reluctance to frequent these places. Avoiding public spaces out of fear can negatively impact soldiers' and their significant others' social interactions and activities, affecting their peace of mind and quality of life.

Second, the implications of soldiers' workload negatively impacting their peace of mind are significant since it can significantly affect their mental, emotional, and overall well-being. Our research results on workload showed that unvarying demands to meet deadlines, complete tasks, and manage responsibilities can also affect soldiers' mental and emotional resilience. In addition, high workload levels can impair cognitive functions such as attention, memory, decision-making, problem-solving, and mental and emotional resilience. Furthermore, workload might impinge on work feat and amplify the peril of blunders and mishaps in warfare, as flash verdicts are essential. High-stress and demanding work environments can result in chronic stress, anxiety, and impaired cognitive functions. Increased workloads also threaten physical health, affecting work performance and increasing the risk of errors in warfare.

Soldiers' demanding work schedules and prolonged absences due to workload can strain relationships and erode crucial support networks. The imbalance between work and personal life can lead to dissatisfaction and frustration. A heavy workload can make it challenging for soldiers to engage in activities they enjoy, leading to burnout and reduced commitment to the military.

Third, military organisations must prioritise soldiers' mental health and well-being by providing access to resources such as counselling and support programmes that help them manage their personal life expectations alongside their military duties for better peace of mind. Besides, this benefits individual soldiers and contributes to the overall effectiveness and readiness of the defense organisations. For military leaders, it is essential to understand and address the personal well-being of their subordinates, as this is necessary to maintain leadership credibility and overall discipline within the unit.

Fourth, soldiers' personal life expectations can moderate their fear of terrorism and peace of mind. How soldiers perceive their personal life and fear of terrorism can influence their mental well-being. Soldiers with positive personal life expectations may experience less

negative impact from their fear of terrorism. This positive outlook may help mitigate psychological distress caused by their fears related to terrorism. Military personnel with elevated personal life expectations and affirmative viewpoint might demonstrate superior pliability in the face of trepidation and nervous tension founded by terrorism. Their affirmative viewpoint on their personal lives might add to improved emotional adaptation approach.

Nevertheless, military personnel who require affirmative, unique outlooks might experience undesirable effects of apprehension of terrorism on their peace of mind. Military personnel presented with personal stressors may amplify the brunt of external pressures on their psychological health and comfort. Military personnel with well-built personal life expectations might be additionally prone to center on their inner resources of glee and fulfilment, which might assist them in sustaining healthier peace of mind. Defense organisations managements might be required to mull over the sundry brunt of personal life expectations and trepidation of terrorism on their soldiers' health security, with comfort, and if there are apposite shore-up systems, possessions, and contact strait to aid defense forces handle unique and outside stressors.

Lastly, infer that defense forces' personal life expectations do not sway their psychological health, safety, and security in a weighty workload. In that case, it suggests that the impact of the workload on their stress levels remains the same regardless of their outlook. Soldiers may experience consistent stress levels and reduced peace of mind due to their workload, regardless of their expectations. Similarly, this could lead to difficulties in managing stress within the military and may result in reduced psychological resilience among military personnel. Additionally, soldiers who face a significant workload impacting their peace of mind without the moderating effect of positive personal life expectations may require assistance to maintain high-performance levels, focus, and decision-making. The consistent impact of workload on peace of mind could contribute to increased mental health concerns within the military population, including higher levels of burnout, stress, and anxiety. Consequently, soldiers facing consistently high workloads that affect their peace of mind may be more likely to consider leaving the military or not reenlisting due to the strain on their overall well-being.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Examining the influence of personal life expectations on the correlation between fear of terrorism, workload, and peace of mind among soldiers is a multifaceted endeavour accompanied by inherent limitations. The subjective nature of personal life expectations, fear of terrorism, workload, and peace of mind pose challenges in accurate measurement due to individual variances. Cross-sectional studies offer only a momentary glimpse, with societal expectations influencing soldiers' responses. Consequently, the findings may not generalise to other military contexts or civilian populations. To fortify the validity of their results, researchers should employ mixed methods and longitudinal designs while considering the intricate interplay among variables. It is binding to exert circumspection in cracking the outcomes, recognise the subtleties and intricacies of the relationships among variables, and embrace prudence and accountability in their capacity as researchers.

## Suggestions for Further Studies

Addressing the fear of terrorism requires a multifaceted approach. For instance, enhancing security measures could involve (Enhanced surveillance and intelligence gathering,

fortification of military bases, regular security drills and training, improved equipment and technology, counselling and mental health services, stress management programs, support networks and peer groups, education and awareness, risk assessment and management, leadership and support, community engagement, cybersecurity, and use of drones and UAVs). Promoting social cohesion might include initiatives such as (Intercultural dialogue projects in defence diversified climate, military defence community development initiatives, soldiers inclusive education, military community education workshops, job creation programs, social enterprises, mental health support, health equity initiatives, inclusive policy-making, and anti-discrimination policies). Providing mental health support for affected soldiers could entail (Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), support groups, trauma-focused group therapy, mindfulness and meditation programs, yoga and physical fitness programs, military one source, veteran crisis line, telemedicine for mental health, mobile apps for mental health, family therapy programs, community integration programs, resilience training, mental health awareness workshops). Open dialogue and understanding among diverse communities can also help reduce fear and build a more peaceful and resilient society. Providing comprehensive training and fostering a supportive military culture can help boost soldiers' coping abilities and resilience. Promoting soldiers' mental well-being contributes to creating a resilient, compassionate, and healthy society and enables them to achieve their personal life expectations.

Addressing the root causes of terrorism and implementing effective national-level counterterrorism strategies can reduce soldiers' fear. However, it is equally important to delve into their perception of the threat and their coping abilities. This knowledge is critical in inventing techniques that truly promote well-being. Resilience is essential for soldiers to cope with the demands of their profession and maintain peace of mind. Recognition and addressing workload concerns are crucial to support military personnel's health and well-being. Furthermore, considering personal life expectations can enhance preparation programs to improve soldiers' mental resilience. Insights from further studies are essential for promoting a holistic approach to defence forces' health, well-being, and security.

Despite the lack of moderation, defence forces should prioritise efficient workload management to prevent unnecessary stress and maintain the well-being and security of military personnel. However, it is not enough to prioritise. Workload management and mental health support need constant reassessment. Understanding the reasons for the lack of moderation could provide insights into other factors influencing the relationship between workload and well-being. This understanding can guide military organisations to reassess their approaches and make necessary changes to maintain soldiers' well-being and operational effectiveness.

## SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

The results of our study demonstrate the significant influence of personal life expectations in moderating the impact of fear of terrorism and workload on soldiers' peace of mind. We advocate for cultivating positive outlooks to strengthen military personnel's ability to manage stress. This interdisciplinary approach underscores the importance of establishing supportive environments for soldiers. Our research contributes meaningfully to the ongoing endeavour to bolster soldiers' resilience and peace of mind. Subsequent research could delve into factors influencing soldiers' peace of mind independently of personal life expectations, workload, and fear of terrorism.

### Ethics Statement

Before sharing any photos or data that could identify individuals in this article, we obtained informed written consent from the employee(s) and legal guardian/next of kin of any minors involved. All study participants provided their informed consent as well. Additionally, we received ethical approval from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka's research ethics review committee (UNN/EC/010-SC/4002-JA.05).

### Data Availability Statement

Upon request, the authors have committed to providing the raw data that supports their findings.

### Author Contributions

Each author has made a significant and valuable contribution to this manuscript.

**Competing Interests:** We hereby state that we do not have any competing interests.

**Ethical Approval:** All research methods involving human participants align with the institutional research committee's ethical standards, the 1964 Helsinki statement, and subsequent revisions or similar ethical standards.

**Informed Consent:** All individual participants in the research provided informed permission.

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