



Family Resilience in Context: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Infidelity in Nigerian Military Families

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Abstract

Marital infidelity within military families remains an underexplored issue in non-Western contexts despite its implications for family wellbeing and organizational resilience. This study develops a context-sensitive conceptual understanding of the psychological, social, and institutional consequences of infidelity among Nigerian military families through an integrative review of interdisciplinary literature. The thematic synthesis suggests that infidelity extends beyond a private marital issue to become a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by military occupational demands, collectivist family structures, religious values, and institutional support systems. Psychological distress, family instability, community stigma, and organizational barriers emerge as interconnected dimensions influencing both family resilience and military effectiveness. By integrating Walsh's Family Resilience Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* framework, this study proposes a culturally grounded conceptual model that explains how resilience is constructed through interactions among psychological adaptation, kinship networks, faith-based coping, and institutional responses. The review contributes to military family scholarship by extending resilience theory beyond predominantly Western perspectives while informing culturally responsive family welfare policies in military settings.

Article History

Received: 04-05-2026

Revised: 10-06-2026

Accepted: 01-07-2026

Keywords

Family resilience, Marital infidelity, Nigerian military families, Walsh's Family Resilience Theory, Military welfare.

Introduction

Infidelity has long been recognized as one of the most disruptive factors affecting marital stability, with consequences that extend beyond intimate relationships to influence family functioning, psychological wellbeing, and broader social structures. Existing studies consistently associate marital infidelity with depression, anxiety, emotional distress, diminished trust, marital dissatisfaction, and adverse developmental outcomes among children (Amato, 2010; Mark et al., 2011). Within military families, however, these consequences are frequently intensified by occupational characteristics unique to military service, including



prolonged deployments, repeated geographical relocation, operational uncertainty, combat-related trauma, and extended family separation (Drummet et al., 2003; Karney & Crown, 2007). These occupational realities create conditions that simultaneously increase relational vulnerability and complicate the maintenance of emotional intimacy between spouses. Consequently, scholars increasingly argue that infidelity in military families should not be understood merely as an individual moral failing or private marital conflict, but rather as a multidimensional phenomenon with implications for psychological health, family resilience, institutional effectiveness, and military readiness (Britt & Adler, 2003; Knobloch & Theiss, 2012). Understanding these broader implications is particularly important because family stability directly influences soldiers' emotional wellbeing, occupational performance, and organizational cohesion, making marital relationships an integral component of military welfare rather than solely a private domestic concern.

Although scholarship on military families has expanded considerably over the past two decades, the existing literature remains dominated by studies conducted in North American and European settings. Three major strands characterize this body of research. First, scholars have examined structural and occupational determinants of marital instability, emphasizing deployment, combat exposure, prolonged separation, and operational stress as major predictors of relationship disruption (Drummet et al., 2003; Karney & Crown, 2007). Second, psychological studies have explored the emotional consequences of marital betrayal, documenting associations between infidelity and depression, trauma-related symptoms, anxiety, reduced marital satisfaction, and family dissolution (Amato, 2010; Mark et al., 2011). Third, resilience-oriented research has highlighted the protective roles of family communication, religious commitment, social support, and adaptive coping in sustaining military families during periods of relational stress (Pargament, 2007; Walsh, 2016). Despite these important contributions, the literature continues to exhibit two significant limitations. Most empirical evidence originates from Western military institutions, while relatively little attention has been devoted to African military contexts. Furthermore, previous studies rarely integrate psychological processes, institutional environments, cultural traditions, religious values, and kinship systems within a unified analytical framework. This limitation reduces the explanatory power of existing theories when applied to collectivist societies in which marriage functions not merely as a private relationship but also as a social, religious, and familial institution.

Nigeria represents a particularly important context for addressing these limitations because military family life is embedded within complex interactions

among religious beliefs, communal expectations, extended-family obligations, and institutional military culture. Marriage is widely regarded as a collective social institution in which conflicts are frequently negotiated through kinship networks, religious authorities, and community mediation rather than exclusively through individual decision-making (Mbiti, 1991; Isiugo-Abanihe, 1998). At the same time, the Nigerian Armed Forces continue to confront prolonged counterinsurgency operations, peacekeeping deployments, and security challenges that intensify family separation and psychological stress (Ajala & Heinecken, 2024). Existing Nigerian scholarship has examined military welfare deficiencies, deployment-related stress, and the experiences of military families affected by armed conflict, yet infidelity itself has rarely been investigated as a distinct analytical phenomenon shaping family resilience, institutional welfare, and military effectiveness (Ajala & Heinecken, 2024; Nzemeka, 2021). Consequently, a significant conceptual gap remains regarding how marital infidelity intersects with occupational demands, religious ethics, cultural expectations, and institutional support systems within Nigerian military communities. Addressing this gap requires moving beyond explanations that frame infidelity solely as individual misconduct toward a broader understanding that recognizes its embeddedness within interconnected psychological, social, cultural, religious, and organizational processes.

To address this gap, this article presents a conceptual review and integrative synthesis of interdisciplinary scholarship concerning military families, marital infidelity, family resilience, and Nigerian socio-cultural dynamics. Rather than generating new empirical evidence, the study critically synthesizes existing literature to develop a context-sensitive conceptual framework capable of explaining the psychological, social, and institutional implications of infidelity within Nigerian military families. The analysis is informed by four complementary perspectives, namely Social Exchange Theory, Attachment Theory, the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* framework, and Walsh's Family Resilience Theory, each of which contributes distinct explanatory insights into relationship decision-making, emotional attachment, religious values, and adaptive family processes. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the article seeks to explain how military service, cultural norms, kinship obligations, and religious commitments collectively shape experiences of marital betrayal and family resilience. The study contributes to the literature in three important respects. First, it integrates fragmented scholarship from military studies, family psychology, Islamic studies, and African social research into a coherent conceptual framework. Second, it extends current discussions of military family wellbeing by foregrounding the interaction between institutional structures and

culturally embedded family practices. Finally, it identifies conceptual and empirical directions for future research while providing policy-relevant insights for developing culturally responsive family welfare programs within military institutions.

Research Methodology

This study employed a conceptual review and integrative synthesis design to examine the psychological, social, and institutional implications of infidelity among Nigerian military families. This methodological approach was selected because empirical evidence on marital infidelity within Nigerian military settings remains limited and fragmented across multiple disciplines. Rather than generating primary empirical evidence, an integrative review enables researchers to critically synthesize diverse forms of scholarship, identify conceptual relationships, reveal knowledge gaps, and develop a context-sensitive theoretical framework capable of explaining complex social phenomena (Torraco, 2005; Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). Accordingly, the purpose of this study was not to estimate prevalence or establish causal relationships but to integrate existing knowledge concerning military family life, marital infidelity, psychological wellbeing, institutional responses, and socio-religious dynamics within the Nigerian context.

The literature was identified through structured searches of Scopus, Google Scholar, PubMed, and African Journals Online (AJOL), covering publications published between 2000 and 2026. Searches combined keywords such as *"infidelity," "marital infidelity," "military families," "armed forces," "psychological consequences," "family resilience," "marital instability,"* and *"Nigeria"* using Boolean operators where appropriate. Literature was included when it (1) examined marital infidelity, military family relationships, psychological wellbeing, family resilience, or institutional support; (2) provided empirical, theoretical, or review-based insights relevant to military or comparable family contexts; and (3) was published in peer-reviewed journals, scholarly books, or authoritative institutional reports. Duplicate records, publications lacking scholarly rigor, studies unrelated to family relationships, and non-English publications without reliable translations were excluded. In addition to international scholarship, Nigerian-focused literature concerning military families, marriage, religion, and family dynamics was incorporated to strengthen contextual interpretation. Illustrative narratives and anonymized composite vignettes drawn from published literature were used exclusively to contextualize theoretical discussions and were not treated as primary empirical evidence.

The analytical procedures followed the six-phase thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), adapted for integrative literature synthesis. The process began with repeated reading of the selected literature to develop familiarity with the data and identify preliminary analytical patterns. Subsequently, relevant concepts were systematically coded using a combination of deductive and inductive approaches. Deductive coding was guided by Social Exchange Theory, Attachment Theory, the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* framework, and Walsh's Family Resilience Theory, while inductive coding allowed new themes to emerge directly from the literature, including faith-based coping, institutional stigma, military organizational culture, community support, and extended-family mediation. Related codes were then grouped into broader conceptual themes, reviewed for internal coherence, interpreted in relation to the research questions, and finally synthesized into a context-sensitive conceptual framework explaining the interaction between psychological vulnerability, family processes, institutional structures, cultural norms, and religious values. To improve methodological transparency, the six analytical phases are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Six-Phase Thematic Analysis Process

Phase	Analytical Procedure	Application in This Study	Output
1. Familiarization with the Literature	Repeated reading and analytical memo writing to gain an in-depth understanding of the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006).	Reviewed interdisciplinary literature on military families, marital infidelity, psychological wellbeing, institutional support, religion, and Nigerian socio-cultural contexts.	Initial understanding of recurring concepts and contextual patterns.
2. Initial Coding	Systematic coding using deductive and inductive approaches.	Deductive codes were informed by Social Exchange Theory, Attachment Theory, <i>Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah</i> , and Walsh's Family Resilience Theory, while inductive codes emerged from the reviewed literature.	Comprehensive coding framework integrating theoretical and emergent concepts.
3. Theme Development	Related codes were organized into broader conceptual categories.	Codes were grouped into themes concerning psychological consequences, family relationships, institutional responses, cultural values, and resilience mechanisms.	Preliminary analytical themes.
4. Theme Review and Refinement	Themes were reviewed to ensure conceptual	Cross-comparison of interdisciplinary evidence was conducted to identify	Refined and theoretically

	coherence and consistency across the literature.	convergent and divergent interpretations and eliminate conceptual overlap.	coherent themes.
5. Interpretation and Synthesis	Themes were interpreted in relation to the research questions and theoretical framework.	Relationships among military service, marital infidelity, psychological wellbeing, institutional support, family resilience, and religious values were synthesized into an integrated analytical narrative.	Integrated conceptual explanation addressing the research objectives.
6. Conceptual Framework Development	Final synthesis to construct a context-sensitive conceptual framework.	The reviewed evidence was integrated into a framework explaining the interaction between psychological, social, cultural, religious, and institutional dimensions influencing military families.	Context-sensitive conceptual framework and future research agenda.

Source: Adapted from [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#) and developed by the authors.

To enhance the credibility and transparency of the review, several strategies were adopted. Theoretical triangulation was achieved by interpreting the literature through multiple complementary theoretical perspectives, while source triangulation integrated evidence from psychology, sociology, military studies, family studies, and Islamic studies ([Denzin, 2012](#)). Reflexivity was maintained through continuous discussion among the authors regarding analytical decisions, theoretical interpretations, and potential sources of bias, alongside deliberate consideration of contradictory evidence identified during the review process. Furthermore, thick contextual description was employed to improve the transferability of the conceptual interpretations to comparable socio-cultural settings. Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. As a conceptual review, it relies exclusively on secondary sources and therefore does not generate primary empirical evidence or permit statistical generalization. Instead, its primary contribution lies in integrating fragmented scholarship, advancing theoretical understanding, and identifying conceptual propositions that may guide future empirical investigations and culturally responsive family welfare policies within military institutions ([Patton, 2015](#)).

Psychological Consequences of Infidelity Among Nigerian Military Personnel: Depression, Trauma, and Maladaptive Coping

Psychological consequences represent one of the most significant yet insufficiently explored dimensions of marital infidelity within military families. Unlike civilian households, military families experience unique occupational pressures arising from prolonged deployment, operational uncertainty, repeated

family separation, and cumulative exposure to traumatic events. These occupational demands create an environment in which relational disruptions, including marital infidelity, are likely to interact with pre-existing psychological vulnerabilities rather than occur as isolated interpersonal events. Although empirical studies focusing specifically on infidelity among Nigerian military families remain limited, converging evidence from Nigerian military mental health research, trauma psychology, family resilience studies, and conflict-related literature provides a robust conceptual basis for understanding the potential psychological consequences of marital betrayal in this population. Collectively, the reviewed literature suggests that psychological distress following infidelity should be understood through four interconnected pathways: depressive symptoms and emotional distress, trauma-related responses, maladaptive coping behaviours, and gendered coping strategies shaped by socio-cultural expectations. Rather than operating independently, these pathways reinforce one another within the broader military environment, where occupational stress, institutional culture, and family dynamics continuously interact.

The first pathway concerns the interaction between depression and trauma-related responses. Across Nigerian military personnel, veterans, and conflict-affected populations, trauma exposure has consistently been associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), while depressive symptoms frequently emerge as concurrent psychological conditions (Nwoye, 2024; Femi-Lawal et al., 2023; Osa-Afiana, 2022; Chukwuemeka et al., 2024). Although these investigations do not directly examine marital infidelity, they provide a valuable theoretical foundation for conceptualizing betrayal as a form of interpersonal trauma occurring within an already stressful occupational context. Military personnel exposed to combat or operational stress may possess diminished psychological resources for managing additional relational crises, making marital betrayal more likely to intensify emotional dysregulation, intrusive thoughts, hopelessness, and hypervigilance. This interpretation is consistent with trauma theory, which proposes that subsequent interpersonal stressors often reactivate previous traumatic experiences rather than generating entirely independent psychological responses. Consequently, the reviewed literature suggests that the psychological consequences of infidelity are likely to be cumulative, emerging through the interaction between prior trauma exposure and the emotional disruption associated with marital betrayal.

A second psychological pathway involves maladaptive coping strategies and the influence of socio-cultural gender norms. The reviewed literature consistently indicates that prolonged occupational stress among Nigerian

military personnel is associated with avoidant coping, emotional suppression, social withdrawal, and, in some circumstances, substance misuse (Sandra, 2022; Udeh et al., 2022; Oluwasanu et al., 2024). Within the context of marital infidelity, these coping responses may become more pronounced because individuals must simultaneously navigate occupational responsibilities and family disruption. Importantly, coping behaviours are mediated not only by individual psychological characteristics but also by culturally embedded expectations surrounding masculinity, femininity, and marital responsibility. Masculine norms emphasizing emotional restraint and resilience may discourage formal help-seeking among military personnel, whereas women experiencing betrayal frequently encounter stronger social stigma and greater expectations to preserve family unity despite emotional suffering (Roseline et al., 2023). These findings indicate that psychological responses to infidelity should not be interpreted exclusively through clinical perspectives but must also be understood within the broader socio-cultural environment governing emotional expression, marital obligations, and acceptable coping behaviour.

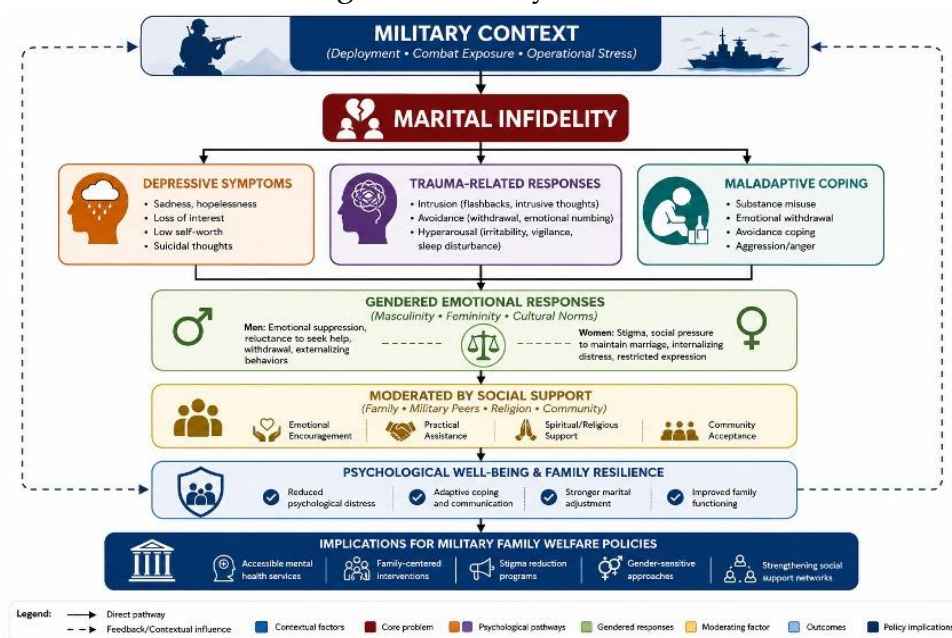
The reviewed studies further demonstrate that social support constitutes an important protective mechanism capable of moderating psychological distress. Research involving Nigerian veterans indicates that stronger perceived social support contributes to lower PTSD symptoms and greater psychological resilience through enhanced self-efficacy (Chukwuemeka et al., 2024). Similar patterns have been observed among women affected by the Boko Haram insurgency, where community solidarity, religious institutions, and extended-family networks facilitate emotional recovery following traumatic experiences (Roseline et al., 2023). However, within military families experiencing infidelity, social support performs a dual function. While spouses, relatives, peers, and faith communities may provide emotional reassurance and facilitate reconciliation, the same social networks may simultaneously reinforce stigma surrounding marital failure and discourage disclosure of psychological distress or professional counselling. Consequently, the effectiveness of social support depends not only on its availability but also on prevailing cultural attitudes toward mental health, gender roles, and marital fidelity. These findings suggest that psychological recovery following infidelity is embedded within broader family and community processes rather than determined solely by individual resilience.

Taken together, the reviewed literature suggests that the psychological consequences of infidelity among Nigerian military families are best understood through an interactional framework rather than a linear cause-and-effect relationship. Depression, trauma-related responses, maladaptive coping

behaviours, and gendered emotional regulation evolve through the continuous interaction between occupational stress, previous trauma exposure, cultural expectations, institutional environments, and available social support. This synthesis extends existing military family scholarship by conceptualizing marital infidelity as a multidimensional psychosocial stressor embedded within organizational and socio-cultural structures rather than merely an interpersonal relationship problem. The proposed framework also identifies several mechanisms through which military service and marital betrayal may jointly influence psychological wellbeing, thereby providing a conceptual foundation for future empirical investigations and culturally responsive family welfare interventions.

To facilitate interpretation of the thematic synthesis, [Figure 1](#) illustrates the conceptual pathways through which marital infidelity may influence psychological wellbeing among Nigerian military families. Rather than representing a linear sequence of events, the model highlights the dynamic interaction between occupational stressors, relational disruption, socio-cultural expectations, coping processes, and protective resources identified across the reviewed literature.

Figure 1
Conceptual Pathways of the Psychological Consequences of Infidelity among Nigerian Military Families



Source: Developed by the authors based on the synthesis of [Nwoye \(2024\)](#), [Femi-Lawal et al. \(2023\)](#), [Osa-Afiana \(2022\)](#), [Chukwuemeka et al. \(2024\)](#), [Sandra \(2022\)](#), [Udeh et al. \(2022\)](#), [Oluwasanu et al. \(2024\)](#), and [Roseline et al. \(2023\)](#).

Figure 1 demonstrates that the psychological consequences of infidelity emerge through multiple interacting mechanisms rather than through a single causal pathway. Military-specific stressors, including deployment, combat exposure, and operational demands, create conditions that increase vulnerability to relational disruption. Once infidelity occurs, its psychological effects are mediated by trauma histories, coping strategies, gender norms, and the availability of social support. The model further emphasizes that family resilience and psychological wellbeing are influenced not only by individual characteristics but also by institutional culture and community resources. By integrating evidence from trauma psychology, military studies, family resilience, and Nigerian socio-cultural research, the framework offers a context-sensitive explanation of how marital betrayal may affect military families. This conceptual model also provides a theoretical basis for future empirical research examining the relationships among occupational stress, relational trauma, coping mechanisms, and culturally responsive interventions within military institutions.

Infidelity and its Cascading Social Consequences in the Nigerian Military Context: Family Destabilization, Child Outcomes, and Extended-Family Mediation

Infidelity within military families extends far beyond the intimate relationship between spouses, generating a cascade of social consequences that influence family stability, child development, kinship relations, and community cohesion. In the Nigerian context, marriage is deeply embedded within collective social structures in which extended families, religious institutions, and local communities actively participate in maintaining marital stability and resolving domestic conflict. Consequently, marital betrayal is rarely experienced as a private matter but instead becomes a social event affecting multiple actors within the family and community network. Although empirical studies specifically investigating infidelity among Nigerian military families remain limited, the reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that marital disruption generates interconnected consequences extending beyond the couple to influence children, relatives, and broader community relationships. Rather than conceptualizing infidelity simply as a cause of divorce, this review interprets it as a multidimensional social process operating through five interrelated mechanisms: marital instability, child wellbeing, extended-family mediation, economic vulnerability, and community stigma. Collectively, these dimensions illustrate how family outcomes are shaped not only by interpersonal relationships but also by broader institutional and socio-cultural environments.

The first two dimensions concern marital instability and child wellbeing. Across Nigerian communities, infidelity is consistently identified as a major antecedent of marital conflict, separation, and divorce, thereby undermining family cohesion and long-term household stability (Uroko & Enobong, 2022; Ajayi et al., 2021; Oseghale, 2025). Within military barracks, these consequences may be amplified by prolonged deployments, occupational stress, and close residential arrangements that increase the visibility of marital problems within military communities. Family disruption following infidelity rarely remains confined to the couple but frequently extends to children through emotional distress, behavioural difficulties, educational disruption, and increased exposure to economic insecurity (Oseghale, 2025; Nduka et al., 2023; Ezelote et al., 2021). Military-specific circumstances further intensify these risks because access to housing, healthcare, and financial security is often connected to the serving member's employment status. Consequently, marital betrayal should be understood as a family-level disruption capable of simultaneously weakening marital relationships and compromising children's psychological and developmental wellbeing.

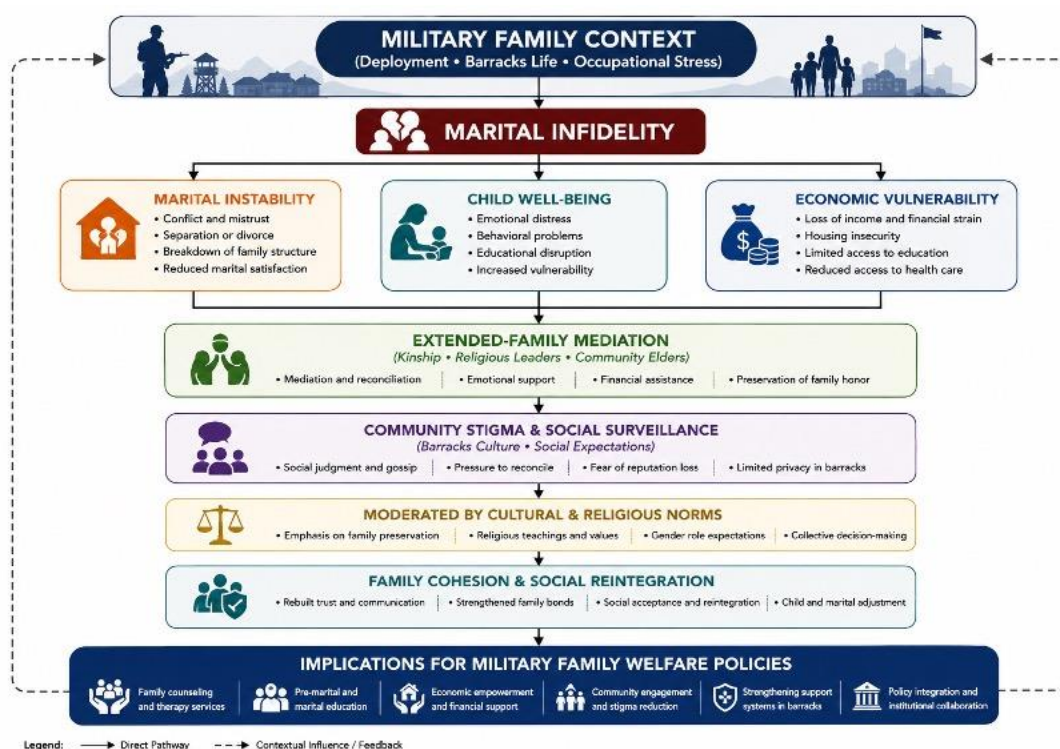
The reviewed literature further identifies extended-family mediation and economic vulnerability as two interrelated mechanisms that significantly shape family responses following marital betrayal within Nigerian military communities. Unlike individualistic societies where marital conflicts are largely negotiated between spouses, Nigerian marriages are embedded within collectivist kinship structures in which parents, siblings, elders, and other relatives frequently intervene to preserve family cohesion, negotiate reconciliation, and safeguard collective family interests (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1998). Such mediation often serves as an important protective resource by providing emotional support, financial assistance, childcare, and moral guidance during periods of marital instability. In many cases, these kinship networks reduce the immediate social and economic consequences of separation while reinforcing collective responsibility for child welfare, family continuity, and community reputation. However, the reviewed evidence also suggests that extended-family intervention may unintentionally reinforce unequal gender expectations by encouraging spouses—particularly women—to endure marital betrayal in the interest of preserving family honour, religious obligations, and social harmony. Consequently, reconciliation may sometimes reflect cultural expectations rather than individual wellbeing or personal agency.

Economic vulnerability further intensifies these dynamics by restricting the practical options available to affected families. Separation or divorce following infidelity frequently results in reduced household income, housing insecurity,

disrupted educational opportunities for children, and diminished access to healthcare, particularly among spouses who depend financially on serving military personnel (Oseghale, 2025; Ubelejit-Nte & Nwakanma, 2023; Nduka et al., 2023). Within military communities, these consequences become even more complex because accommodation, healthcare benefits, social identity, and welfare provisions are closely tied to military employment. Family breakdown therefore represents not only a relational crisis but also a potential loss of economic security, institutional protection, and social belonging. This interaction between kinship obligations and economic dependence demonstrates that responses to infidelity are shaped by broader structural conditions, reinforcing the argument that family resilience in Nigerian military settings emerges through the dynamic interplay of cultural norms, material resources, and institutional environments rather than through individual coping alone.

Figure 2

Conceptual Pathways of the Social and Familial Consequences of Infidelity among Nigerian Military Families



Source: Developed by the authors based on the thematic synthesis of the reviewed literature.

Figure 2 synthesizes the principal social mechanisms identified across the reviewed literature. Rather than presenting infidelity as an isolated interpersonal event, the framework demonstrates that marital betrayal initiates a chain of

interconnected social processes extending from marital instability to broader family and community outcomes. The model highlights that family disruption affects children's wellbeing and household economic security while simultaneously activating extended-family mediation and community responses. These processes are further shaped by cultural and religious norms that influence whether reconciliation, separation, or continued family cohesion becomes the dominant outcome. Accordingly, the framework emphasizes that family recovery depends not solely on the decisions of individual spouses but also on the interaction between kinship resources, military institutional structures, and community support systems. By integrating these dimensions into a single conceptual model, the figure provides a clearer explanation of how social relationships mediate the consequences of infidelity within Nigerian military families and identifies important leverage points for culturally responsive military family welfare policies.

Following the mechanisms illustrated in [Figure 3](#), the reviewed literature further demonstrates that community stigma constitutes one of the most influential factors shaping post-infidelity family trajectories. Across many Nigerian communities, divorce and family dissolution continue to be associated with social disapproval, encouraging couples to seek reconciliation through informal mediation rather than formal legal mechanisms ([Ubelejit-Nte & Nwakanma, 2023](#); [Aina-Pelemo et al., 2023](#)). Within military barracks, where residential proximity, organizational hierarchy, and peer surveillance are particularly strong, stigma may become even more pronounced. Marital conflicts rarely remain private because rumours, informal discussions, and collective expectations influence family decision-making. Consequently, community networks simultaneously operate as protective and restrictive institutions. They may facilitate reconciliation, emotional support, and collective responsibility for family welfare, while also reinforcing gender inequalities, discouraging professional counselling, and limiting the autonomy of spouses experiencing marital betrayal. The reviewed evidence therefore suggests that effective family support requires balancing cultural commitments to family preservation with the protection of individual wellbeing and access to formal support services.

Taken together, the reviewed literature indicates that the social consequences of infidelity among Nigerian military families are best understood through an ecological perspective in which marital relationships are embedded within interconnected family, community, institutional, and cultural systems. Marital instability, child wellbeing, economic vulnerability, extended-family mediation, and community stigma should therefore be interpreted as mutually reinforcing processes rather than isolated outcomes. This synthesis extends

existing scholarship by demonstrating that infidelity represents not only a private marital crisis but also a broader disruption of social relationships and institutional support structures. More importantly, the proposed conceptual framework identifies how military organizational contexts, cultural norms, kinship systems, and welfare institutions jointly influence family resilience and post-infidelity recovery. These insights provide a foundation for future empirical research while informing the design of culturally responsive, family-centred, and institutionally integrated welfare interventions for military communities in Nigeria.

Institutional and Community Repercussions of Infidelity in Nigerian Barracks: Implications for Morale, Cohesion, and Family Welfare

Marital infidelity within military communities extends beyond the private sphere of family life to influence institutional functioning, organizational culture, and operational effectiveness. In military organizations, family stability constitutes an important component of personnel readiness because soldiers' psychological wellbeing, morale, and occupational performance are closely intertwined with the quality of their family relationships. Within Nigerian military barracks, where professional and domestic lives frequently intersect through shared residential environments and close social interactions, marital conflict may generate institutional consequences that exceed the immediate experiences of affected families. Although empirical studies directly examining infidelity within Nigerian military institutions remain limited, the reviewed literature consistently suggests that unresolved marital distress may weaken interpersonal trust, reduce unit cohesion, diminish morale, and negatively influence public perceptions of the armed forces. Rather than conceptualizing infidelity solely as a private domestic issue, the evidence supports understanding family wellbeing as an institutional concern that contributes directly to organizational resilience, military professionalism, and long-term operational readiness.

A central finding emerging from the reviewed literature concerns the institutional barriers that discourage military personnel and their families from utilizing available welfare services. Existing studies indicate that counseling, chaplaincy, and family support programs frequently remain underutilized despite increasing awareness of mental health and family-related challenges within Nigerian military communities (Ibu et al., 2025; Ibu & Mhlongo, 2022). Three interconnected barriers appear particularly influential. First, stigma surrounding marital conflict and psychological support discourages personnel from disclosing family problems because such disclosure may be perceived as

evidence of personal weakness or professional inadequacy. Second, hierarchical organizational cultures may reduce confidence in confidentiality, leading personnel to fear potential career consequences associated with seeking assistance. Third, welfare services that fail to reflect local religious beliefs, ethnic diversity, and culturally embedded understandings of marriage often struggle to gain legitimacy among military families. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of institutional support depends not only on the availability of services but also on organizational trust, cultural competence, and perceived confidentiality.

The reviewed evidence further suggests that institutional responses to marital infidelity should move beyond reactive crisis intervention toward comprehensive, preventive, and family-centred welfare systems that recognize family wellbeing as an essential component of military effectiveness. Rather than limiting support to situations in which marital relationships have already deteriorated, military welfare programs should incorporate routine family education, premarital and postmarital counseling, confidential psychological services, relationship enrichment programs, and structured family resilience initiatives as integral elements of personnel development throughout the military career. Such preventive approaches acknowledge that family resilience is strengthened through continuous support rather than emergency intervention alone. Existing evaluations of military welfare and health programs in Nigeria indicate that early identification of family stressors, leadership commitment, interdisciplinary collaboration, and sustained professional supervision contribute to greater service utilization, improved psychological wellbeing, and stronger organizational responsiveness (Ajala & Heinecken, 2024; Ayemoba et al., 2022; Ibu et al., 2025). These findings imply that military organizations should regard family support not as a supplementary welfare activity but as a strategic investment that enhances personnel readiness, unit cohesion, and long-term institutional resilience.

The reviewed literature also consistently highlights the importance of integrating faith-based resources within professional military welfare systems. Given the central role of religion in Nigerian society, collaboration among chaplaincy services, psychologists, social workers, family counselors, and respected religious leaders may enhance institutional legitimacy, strengthen trust, and reduce the stigma that frequently discourages military personnel and their families from seeking professional assistance. Nevertheless, such collaboration should be guided by clear professional standards, ethical accountability, and cultural inclusivity to ensure that spiritual care complements rather than substitutes evidence-informed psychosocial interventions.

Integrating professional mental health services with culturally meaningful religious support therefore offers a more holistic model of military family welfare, one capable of simultaneously strengthening individual wellbeing, family resilience, organizational trust, and operational readiness within the unique socio-cultural context of the Nigerian Armed Forces.

Figure 3

Institutional Pathways Linking Family Welfare and Military Readiness



Source: Developed by the authors based on the thematic synthesis of [Ajala and Heineken \(2024\)](#), [Ibu et al. \(2025\)](#), [Ibu and Mhlongo \(2022\)](#), [Ayemoba et al. \(2022\)](#), [Njoku et al. \(2024\)](#), and related literature.

Figure 3 illustrates that family wellbeing functions as a strategic institutional resource rather than merely a private domestic concern. The model demonstrates that marital infidelity may reduce trust, weaken unit cohesion, and diminish organizational morale, thereby creating conditions that undermine both family welfare and institutional effectiveness. Importantly, the framework highlights that these consequences are not inevitable but are mediated by organizational factors, including stigma, hierarchical structures, perceptions of confidentiality, and the cultural appropriateness of available welfare services. Consequently, strengthening family welfare requires more than expanding counseling services alone; it demands an integrated institutional strategy that combines professional psychosocial care, chaplaincy, leadership engagement, and culturally responsive

family support. By positioning family wellbeing as a determinant of organizational resilience and operational readiness, the model extends existing military welfare scholarship and provides a practical framework for institutional reform within the Nigerian Armed Forces.

The reviewed literature ultimately suggests that institutional responses to marital infidelity should be embedded within broader military welfare policies that recognize family stability as an essential contributor to mission effectiveness. Rather than measuring organizational readiness exclusively through operational capability, military institutions should incorporate indicators of family wellbeing, service utilization, and psychosocial resilience into their broader personnel support strategies. Such an approach reframes family welfare from a peripheral social service into a strategic organizational investment that enhances trust, strengthens institutional legitimacy, and promotes sustainable operational performance. Future empirical research should examine how leadership styles, organizational culture, welfare accessibility, and family resilience interact across different branches of the Nigerian Armed Forces. Such evidence would provide a stronger empirical foundation for designing culturally responsive and institutionally integrated family welfare policies capable of improving both military effectiveness and the wellbeing of service members and their families.

Theorizing Family Resilience: Integrating Psychological, Social, and Institutional Perspectives

This review sought to develop a context-sensitive understanding of the psychological, social, and institutional implications of marital infidelity among Nigerian military families by integrating evidence from military studies, family psychology, sociology, and religious scholarship. Rather than conceptualizing infidelity as a purely private moral issue, the thematic synthesis consistently suggests that marital betrayal functions as a multidimensional psychosocial stressor embedded within military organizational structures, collectivist family systems, and culturally informed understandings of marriage. Across the reviewed literature, three interrelated domains emerged as central to explaining post-infidelity experiences: psychological wellbeing, family and community relationships, and institutional responses. These domains should not be interpreted independently because they interact continuously through military occupational stress, kinship obligations, religious values, and organizational cultures. Consequently, the reviewed evidence indicates that family wellbeing constitutes an important determinant of military resilience, extending the discussion of infidelity beyond interpersonal relationships to encompass organizational effectiveness and operational readiness.

Regarding the first research question, the reviewed literature consistently indicates that the psychological consequences of infidelity are intensified by the occupational realities of military service. Previous studies demonstrate that exposure to combat, operational stress, and repeated family separation contributes to depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), emotional withdrawal, and maladaptive coping among Nigerian military personnel and conflict-affected populations (Nwoye, 2024; Femi-Lawal et al., 2023; Osa-Afiana, 2022). The thematic synthesis suggests that marital betrayal should be understood as a form of relational trauma that interacts with existing psychological vulnerabilities rather than functioning as an isolated stressful event. Individuals with previous trauma exposure may therefore experience more severe emotional consequences following infidelity, while the availability of social support and adaptive coping strategies moderates the severity of psychological outcomes. These observations reinforce Family Resilience Theory by demonstrating that resilience emerges through the interaction of belief systems, communication patterns, and social resources rather than through individual coping alone.

The second research question concerns the broader social consequences of infidelity within Nigerian military families. The reviewed evidence demonstrates that marital betrayal extends beyond the couple to influence child wellbeing, kinship relations, economic security, and community cohesion. Unlike individualistic settings where marital conflict is primarily negotiated between spouses, Nigerian family life is embedded within extensive kinship systems that actively participate in conflict resolution and family decision-making. Consequently, extended-family mediation frequently functions as both a protective resource and a source of social pressure, particularly where cultural expectations prioritize family preservation over marital dissolution. The reviewed literature further indicates that children's wellbeing, household economic stability, and community relationships are closely interconnected, suggesting that the consequences of infidelity should be interpreted through an ecological rather than an individual perspective. This finding expands previous research by demonstrating that family resilience is shaped simultaneously by interpersonal relationships, socio-cultural norms, and community support systems rather than by marital relationships alone.

The third research question addresses institutional implications for the Nigerian Armed Forces. The synthesis indicates that family instability may have consequences extending beyond household wellbeing to influence unit cohesion, organizational trust, morale, and public confidence in military institutions. Existing studies consistently identify stigma, hierarchical organizational

structures, concerns regarding confidentiality, and culturally insensitive service delivery as significant barriers limiting the utilization of counseling, chaplaincy, and welfare services (Ajala & Heinecken, 2024; Ibu et al., 2025; Ibu & Mhlongo, 2022). These findings suggest that strengthening military family welfare requires more than expanding existing support services. Institutional effectiveness depends upon integrating culturally responsive counseling, professional psychosocial support, faith-based resources, and leadership commitment within a coherent welfare framework that encourages early help-seeking while protecting confidentiality and professional dignity.

The findings also extend existing theoretical discussions concerning marital relationships and resilience within military environments. Walsh's Family Resilience Theory provides an appropriate framework for explaining how belief systems, organizational patterns, and communication processes facilitate adaptation following relational crises (Walsh, 2016). However, the reviewed evidence suggests that resilience within Nigerian military families cannot be fully understood without incorporating culturally embedded concepts of kinship, religion, and collective responsibility. Similarly, Social Exchange Theory explains relationship decision-making through perceived costs and benefits, yet the reviewed literature indicates that decisions regarding reconciliation or separation are frequently influenced by extended-family obligations, religious commitments, and communal expectations rather than purely individual calculations (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Isiugo-Abanihe, 1998). Furthermore, integrating the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* framework enriches this interpretation by demonstrating how the preservation of family, lineage (*hifz al-nasl*), and social harmony influences responses to marital betrayal in Muslim communities (Kamali, 2008). Accordingly, this review proposes a culturally grounded conceptual understanding that integrates psychological, relational, institutional, and religious dimensions within a single explanatory framework.

The synthesis both confirms and extends previous international scholarship. Consistent with studies conducted in Western military settings, the reviewed literature supports the conclusion that military service intensifies relationship stressors and increases vulnerability to marital instability (Karney & Crown, 2007; Drummet et al., 2003; Amato, 2010). Nevertheless, the Nigerian context demonstrates several distinctive characteristics that are less visible within Western literature. Extended-family mediation, faith-based coping, and collective social responsibility occupy central roles in managing marital crises, while community surveillance and cultural expectations surrounding marriage substantially influence help-seeking behaviour. Rather than functioning solely as private relationship problems, experiences of infidelity are interpreted within

broader social and religious frameworks that shape family decision-making and institutional responses. These contextual differences highlight the importance of avoiding universal assumptions regarding military family wellbeing and underscore the need for culturally sensitive conceptual models capable of explaining family resilience across diverse socio-cultural settings.

Collectively, this review contributes to the literature in three important respects. First, it integrates fragmented scholarship from military studies, family psychology, sociology, and religious studies into a coherent conceptual framework explaining the psychological, social, and institutional consequences of infidelity. Second, it demonstrates that military family wellbeing should be regarded as a strategic institutional resource rather than a peripheral welfare concern, thereby connecting family resilience with organizational resilience and operational readiness. Third, it highlights the importance of cultural and religious contexts in shaping responses to marital betrayal, extending existing resilience theory beyond its predominantly Western empirical foundations. These contributions provide a stronger conceptual basis for future empirical investigations while informing culturally responsive military family welfare policies in Nigeria and other collectivist societies facing comparable institutional and family challenges.

Conclusion

This study developed a context-sensitive conceptual understanding of the psychological, social, and institutional implications of marital infidelity among Nigerian military families through an integrative synthesis of interdisciplinary scholarship. The reviewed evidence consistently suggests that infidelity should not be understood merely as a private moral or marital issue but as a multidimensional phenomenon situated at the intersection of military occupational demands, family relationships, cultural expectations, religious values, and institutional support systems. Rather than producing isolated consequences, marital betrayal initiates interconnected processes that influence psychological wellbeing, family stability, community relationships, and organizational functioning. The synthesis demonstrates that psychological distress, marital instability, child wellbeing, economic vulnerability, institutional barriers, and social stigma are mutually reinforcing dimensions that collectively shape the experiences of military families. At the same time, the review highlights that resilience is not solely an individual psychological capacity but is embedded within broader systems of faith, kinship, and community support that enable families to adapt to relational crises despite significant adversity. By integrating Walsh's Family Resilience Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and

the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* framework, this study proposes a culturally grounded conceptual model demonstrating that family resilience in Nigerian military communities is constructed through the dynamic interaction of psychological adaptation, collective family obligations, religious worldviews, and institutional environments. In doing so, the study extends existing scholarship on military families by moving beyond predominantly Western and individualistic explanations toward a more holistic understanding that recognizes the central role of culture, religion, and collectivist family systems in shaping responses to marital infidelity.

Beyond its theoretical contribution, this review also offers important implications for military family welfare policy and future research. The synthesis suggests that strengthening family resilience requires institutional responses that move beyond reactive crisis management toward comprehensive and preventive welfare strategies integrating confidential counseling, culturally responsive psychosocial services, leadership engagement, stigma-reduction initiatives, and professionally supervised faith-based interventions. More importantly, the review argues that family wellbeing should be recognized as a strategic institutional resource contributing directly to organizational resilience, personnel readiness, and long-term military effectiveness rather than being treated as a peripheral welfare concern. Nevertheless, the study is constrained by its reliance on secondary literature and the limited availability of empirical research specifically addressing marital infidelity among Nigerian military families. Consequently, the proposed conceptual framework should be regarded as a foundation for future empirical investigation rather than a definitive explanatory model. Subsequent research should employ qualitative, quantitative, and longitudinal designs involving military personnel, spouses, children, welfare officers, and chaplaincy services to examine how occupational stress, cultural expectations, religious beliefs, and institutional support interact in shaping family resilience following marital betrayal. Comparative studies across different branches of the Nigerian Armed Forces and other Muslim-majority or collectivist societies would further refine the framework presented in this review while contributing to the development of culturally responsive military family welfare policies capable of strengthening both family wellbeing and operational readiness.

Acknowledgment

The author(s) would like to express sincere gratitude to the reviewers for their valuable time, insightful comments, and constructive suggestions. The critical feedback provided has significantly contributed to enhancing the clarity, depth,

and academic rigor of this article. The author(s) remain grateful for the reviewers' commitment to academic excellence and their generous contribution to the refinement of this work.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Ethical Approval

This study is a literature review based exclusively on secondary data from published academic journals, official reports, and policy documents. It does not involve primary data collection from human subjects, animals, or any form of direct intervention. Therefore, ethical approval was not required for this research.

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