

Integrative Trauma Counselling Approach: An Effective Counselling Approach on Women Survivors of the Boko Haram Insurgency in Michika, Adamawa State, Nigeria

Roseline Luka Vandi

Faculty of Theology, St. Paul's University

Limuru, Kenya.

roselinevandi@gmail.com

+2348036182902

Abstract

There are various forms of insurgency across the nations, one of them is terrorism which has become a global phenomenon. In Nigeria, one of the common ones is that of the devastating activities of the Boko Haram. Boko Haram is a terrorist group that has brought untold hardship and destruction to the lives and properties of the citizens in this nation intending to probably gain control over the leadership of the country. The various criminal activities of Boko Haram such as the destruction of lives and properties have brought traumatic experiences to the citizens of Nigeria most especially to women in Michika, Adamawa State. The traumatized state of the victims and the women has aggravated severe consequences on individuals, families, communities, institutions and the nation as a whole. This article is part of a PhD Dissertation in 2023 entitled: “Women Survivors of the Boko Haram Insurgency in Michika - Adamawa State, Nigeria and their traumatic experiences: Implications for the integrative trauma counselling approach”. It is the goal of this work to explore how the integrative trauma counselling approach is an effective method of treating traumatized women of Boko Haram insurgencies. This field research of Boko Haram insurgency which employs a qualitative method is carried out within the metropolis of Michika local government, Adamawa State here in Nigeria. The study adopts the analytical and qualitative method with the combination of both primary and secondary sources to explore the effectiveness of the integrative approach to trauma counselling to meet women survivors at their multiple levels in administering needs within their context of terrorism. This study found out that the integrative approach of trauma counselling is a holistic approach and thus the most viable approach in counselling to address the challenges of traumatic women survivors and to bring holistic restoration to reintegrate them into society so as to cope with their situation. The study recommends that the government should do everything possible to curtail the activities of the Boko Haram insurgency. Church leaders should also organize dialogue with women survivors for mutual understanding and to proffer solutions to their plight.

Keywords: Integrative, Trauma, Counselling, Boko-Haram, Terrorism and Insurgency



Introduction

Insurgency is an anti-progress act which no government will be happy to experience in the country. It is an act whereby wicked and corrupt armed men or forces fight against the government in power in order to take over the leadership of the country. At times, these evil armed forces fight directly with the soldiers and army of the country to take power by all means (Wehmeier, 2005). Nigeria for so many years has been experiencing several forms of insurgency which in one way or another has an adverse effect on the citizens and the economy of the nation. The artificial form of insurgency that has been experienced in Nigeria which in so many ways has been involved in the destruction of life and property is the Boko-Haram sect. This group of people are Islamic fundamentalist who proclaim to be carrying out the injunction of Allah, which involve the clammng of the lands of the nation declaring that it belongs to their God ‘Allah.’ Inameti (2013) discloses that these armed men are responsible for several capturing of innocent citizens, bombing, murdering, and using captured citizens for trade by barter. The destructive activities of Boko Haram are not only experienced in Nigeria but all across the nations in other forms or names. One of the reasons why they gain more ground is that some established people and institutions from this country and other countries of the world provided the necessary materials these wicked men use in perpetuating their evil plans. That is why at times they are not easily terminated; they have become a tough stronghold to the government of the nation. This insurgence group have determined to overthrow the government by all means. They use all the means of transport available to carry out their agenda.

Yahaya (2012) laments that the Northern part than any other part of this nation over the years has experienced several occurrence of terrorist attacks. Dauda (2014) state that the emergence of Internal Displeased People camps (IDP) is a result of the atrocities caused by these insurgency group. This attack by Boko Haram is common in the northern part of Nigeria but in recent times, it is spreading to other parts of Nigeria.

The various activities of the Boko Haram are not a past event but it is still an on-going occurrence. Using the women in Michika, Adamawa State as a case study, this paper examines how the Integrative Trauma Counselling Approach is an effective counselling approach. This study looks into the historical nature of trauma, the effectiveness of integrative trauma counselling gives practical steps in counselling traumatized people and analysis of research findings.

Conceptual Clarification

Langberg (2015) contributes that the activities of these Boko Haram people have made life miserable for thousands of people in this nation. Some natural disasters take place which do not in some time create awareness of their occurrence. They happen naturally and at times suddenly but their effects could be severe causing damage or disorder in the body affecting the physical, spiritual, emotional, social and mental states of people. The term given to this experience can be referred to as trauma. This could be caused by violence, physical wounds, termination of life, disappointment, disasters and severe anxiety. Counselling is a form of counsel according to Hunter (2005) that is given to those who are looking for solutions to their problems.

Counselling is also an assistant in the form of advice and suggestions given to a person in a critical situation to show the person how to overcome the situation (Collins, 2007). The process that addresses the various traumatic experiences of a person to control the effects on the individual bringing restoration to the wellbeing of the victim is known as trauma counselling (Lever, 2012). Vandi (2023:96) quoting Stark, Brammer, and Crofts defines integrative trauma counselling as,

Integrative trauma counselling incorporates a variety of theoretical perspectives and methods to meet the diverse requirements of trauma survivors. The counsellor makes approach decisions based on the client's presentation and identified needs.

Cherry (2021) declares that the use of more than one counselling model to help an individual out of a traumatic circumstance is known as integrative counselling. The importance of women holistically cannot be overemphasized. Azomo (2018) states the relevance and potentiality of women individually, in the family and in society is outstanding. This makes them to be very special and unique as women are the main focus of this work.

Theoretical Framework

There are many methods which can be employed in treating traumatic victims of the Boko Haram insurgency. The several trauma counselling **approaches include the Liberation Growth Model**, the Relationship Oriented Model, Judith Herman's Process of Recovery from Trauma, the Langberg Counselling Model, The Feminist Model, Person Centred Counselling Model and the Theological Model of Trauma Counselling etc. It was discovered that the best approach is the integrative trauma counselling approach which makes use of more than one approach in handling and proffering solutions to the issue of trauma in women. The combination of approaches in treating the women victims is determined by the type of trauma experienced and



the expertise of the therapist and counsellor. The researcher intends to focus majorly on the integrative trauma counselling approach and extract its importance in this paper.

Literature Review

The Historical Nature of Trauma

The concept, types, causes and effect of trauma is still an interesting field of study and research to scholars and professionals in various field such as in the circular and ministerial circle. The extent of the effect of the same trauma experienced by different people will vary from one person to another. Depending on the type of approach used or the maturity of the individual, a particular traumatic event might have less effect on one person and an adverse effect on the other (Giller 1999). There are several causes of trauma of which violence is inclusive. Ibeanu (2012) insinuates that violence arises as a result of some social occurrences such as a lack of needs, discrimination, rejection, anxiety and other psychological discomfort or disorders. Ikenye (2015) in this field tells of the various types of self that are in existence; according to him, there are the Christian self, environmental self, institutional self, relational self, cultural self, social/ethnic self, mental self and physical self. These various aspects react to traumatic experiences both internally and externally and can be well handled by both professional therapists and counsellors.

Kunhiyop (2008) while discussing on biblical perspective on violence notes that there are several instances of violence both in the Old and New Testament. This violence in most cases could lead to traumatic experience(s). Trauma has been biblically traced from the origin of the creation of man in the garden of Eden. The beginning of the fallen nature of man at the expense of the glorious consistent fellowship with the creator which was lost as a result of sin is seen as trauma (Collins, 2007). The undiluted word of God has various instances and examples of those who have experienced extreme situations capable of leading to trauma at one time or the other. A few of them from the biblical understanding of the researcher are the wiping of the whole human race by flood as a result of disobedience to God as experienced by Noah is an example of a traumatic event. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah city by God because of their sins and abominations but only Abraham and Lot were saved by the mercies of God is an experience they would have lived to tell. The death of Uriah at the fierce battle which was caused by David was not a palatable experience for Bathsheba and the death of her child. The New Testament reveals many heroes of faith who went through many devastating experiences (s) but remained firm and strong until the end, the experiences that most of them went through could also be classified as traumatic experience(s) Genesis 3, 19, 2 Samuel 11. Hebrews 11: 36-38 reveals that *some faced jeers and flogging, while others were jailed and put in prison. They were stoned, they were sawn in two: and they were put*

to death by sword. They went about in sheepskins and goat skin, destitute, persecuted and ill-treated, the world was not worthy of them. They wondered in deserts and mountains and in caves and holes in the ground (NIV).

Leonard (2020) explains that when an unpleasant situation which could be traumatic happens to an individual, it could bring a lot of instability to the victim. A traumatic experience can occur both directly and indirectly that is, various situations lead to traumatic occurrence and also, a person can be negatively affected by what happened to another person. This could cause the other person to have the same traumatic feelings that the person directly involved is also feeling. Trauma has been discussed above from a psychological and biblical point of view. Although there are other perspectives on trauma, however, every form of trauma can be well handled and administered by a professional and skilful therapist or counsellor.

Traumatic Disorders

Trauma has been classified into Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The former becomes a reality as soon as the traumatic event has happened to the victim. This puts the victim in a state of restlessness, forgetfulness (of the events that occurred) and instability. The victim also experiences a shock from the reality of the traumatic events and tries to resist every form of reference to the event (Collins, 2007). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder has been grouped by scholars like Smith (2018) into first, reliving the victim's experiences this is when the reminders of traumatic events bring them down. Secondly, the victim may avoid places, people or objects that may trigger the remembrance of such occurrence. Increased arousal is the third which results in a lot of emotional disorder and discomfort. The last category is negative cognition and mood. Missouri's Early Care and Education Connections (2022), reveals that trauma can be categorized into acute trauma, chronic trauma, and complex trauma which is exposure to varied and multiple traumatic events. Floyd (2008) explains that to be diagnosed with PTSD, a trauma survivor must meet certain criteria: firstly, she is exposed to a traumatic event; secondly, she is consistently re-experiencing the event, either through flashbacks, dreams, numbing of responsiveness and avoidance of stimulus that reminds them of the trauma event. Thirdly, arousal and hyper vigilance; and lastly, the symptoms should have occurred for more than thirty days. Also, PTSD leads the victim to manifest abnormal behaviour.

Methodology

The methodology used for this work is a qualitative research approach because information needed to be gotten directly from the mouths of the people who have direct contact and experience in the Boko Haram insurgency in Michika Local Government Area (L.G.A) in Adamawa State, Nigeria. A phenomenological



research design was used to carry out this work in order to get a direct and authentic experience from the people who have witnessed the insurgency in one way or the other. Out of the 100 questionnaires distributed for the research 60 were given to women, 20 to pastors and 20 to youths. The women had the highest number of questionnaires because this work focuses majorly on the women who experience these insurgencies. Some of the respondents willingly responded. The assurance of the researcher who hails from that place gave other respondents confidence to participate. The researcher with her assistants visited the dwelling places of the villagers including other places like farms and marketplaces.

The Effectiveness of Integrative Trauma Counselling

Although there are various approaches to counselling, a single approach is not sufficient for counselling the victims of insurgency, especially in Michika, given the multi-faceted nature of their experiences and predicaments. This study posits that the integrative approach of trauma counselling is a holistic approach and thus the most viable approach in counselling. The reasons for this are given below

The integrative Trauma Counselling Approach is a combination of more than one approach: The integrative approach makes use of two or more approaches in giving treatment to the traumatized victim in order to bring holistic wholeness to the traumatized person. The combination of approaches is used at the discretion of the counsellor or therapist who is believed to be trained. Vandi (2023) quotes authors like Stark, Brammer, and Crofts, these authors reveal that the Trauma Treatment Centre and Research Facility (TTCRF) is a trauma-focused counselling organisation in Rio Rancho New Mexico is the organisation that created the integrated paradigm which is referred to as the Mind Body Transformation Mode (MBTM). This integrative trauma counselling approach was propounded to address the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) that come as a result of emotional, physical, and contact sexual abuse; physical and/or emotional neglect; and varying types of household dysfunction. Adverse Childhood Experiences have a cumulative effect and the greater the number of these experiences by an individual, the greater the likelihood of experiencing negative health outcomes as an adult.

Integrative Trauma Counselling Approach makes use of Scientific treatment: This integrative approach makes use of treatments which are scientifically tested and approved such as Herman's model of trauma recovery; Blaustein and Kinniburgh's Attachment, Regulation, and Competency (ARC); Shapiro's Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR); and Booth and Jernberg's Therapy, etc. (Vandi, 2023).

Integrative Trauma Counselling Approach helps children recover from Adverse Childhood Experiences: Vandi (2023) notes that traumatized women who have some unpleasant experience with insurgency began in their teenage years which has caused them to have various health problems. Children who have this traumatic experience are treated and administered in order to avoid such experiences having a greater effect on them in the future.

Integrative Trauma Counselling Approach empowers Women: Integrative Trauma Counselling Approach empowers women victims of the Boko Haram insurgency in Michika to raise their children and help them recover. This approach helps them to stand strong above their unpleasant experiences which enables them to become more meaningful and useful to themselves and others (Vandi, 2023).

Integrative Trauma Counselling Approach has a sustaining Ability: Holm-Haduala and Holfman (2011, 4) in (Vandi 2023) affirms that:

An integrative model is one that is capable of handling the rising number and diversity of counselling requests while still being theoretically sound and applicable to daily counselling practice. As a result, they suggest the ABCDE integrative counselling approach. Alliance, Behavioural, Cognitive, Dynamic, and Existential are all abbreviated as ABCDE. Alliance signifies the expression and application of sincerity, acceptance, and empathy. The Behavioural methods examine how undesirable behavioural methods may be "unlearned" by adopting certain behavioural methods, leading to the development of a more beneficial substitute. The cognitive approach of psychotherapy is the systematic modification and correction of problematic meanings, values, and beliefs. The core principle of the cognitive approach is that thoughts affect feelings and behaviour.

In addition, Ikenye (2015) thinks that the effectiveness of the integrative counselling approach is seen when ideas and solutions introduced from the Western world are applied taking into consideration the cultural context of Africans. This brings effectiveness in proffering solutions to the traumatized.

Practical Steps in Counselling Traumatic People

Scholars have discussed extensively the steps that can be adopted when counselling traumatic people. The steps are briefly discussed below

Listening: A therapist needs to take time to listen to the words and explanation of the traumatic person. An attentive listening will give the therapist a good



understanding of how the event went. It will also give the therapist or counsellor a clue as to how to counsel or handle the issue at hand. Listening has to do with the observation of the words, non-verbal and other gestures of the victims. The feelings of the victim are well understood if all these are carefully observed (Ikenye, 2015).

Safety: The result of the traumatic event on a person is usually not palatable. This must have brought a lot of pain, reasoning, sorrow or regrets to the individual. The counsellor needs to get a conducive environment where the traumatized person can feel secure and safe. The victim needs to be encouraged and admonished not to give up because of the various unpleasant experience(s); so that the victim can successfully recover from such experience and become much better than before (Collins, 2007).

Narration: This is a procedure and a technique used by counsellors or therapists. It is a process whereby the traumatized person haven been provided with a siren and a good environment and is encouraged to speak out and narrate all the unpleasant traumatic experiences with the motive of lifting up the burden from the victim's mind. There is a lot of information that will be gotten as the victim narrates the event. Voicing and speaking out about this event has the tendency to prevent the incident from causing further damage to the individual since the incidence has been shared with a reliable seeking to help the situation. It also makes the victim to be in charge of the situation (Floyd, 2008).

Intervention: The therapist or the counsellor at this stage makes good use of his/her skills to administer solutions to the victim through listening to and the narration of the victim. The counsellor gets a handful of information which will be used skillfully and intelligently to solve the victim's problem. The counsellor must at first understand the causes or situation that surrounds the traumatic events, this will help to identify the type of trauma experienced and know the right approach in dealing with such. The therapist or counsellor gives good suggestions that will help the victim take the right and appropriate steps toward the victim's healing and restoration. Such steps and suggestions taken seriously by the victim will lead to recovery (Maynard and Snodgrass 2015).

Affirmation: The traumatic event experienced by the victim is capable of introducing doubts and fear to his/her life. At this point, the traumatized person needs encouragement and affirmation which will strengthen him/her and also bring courage to overcome such doubts and fear. This will enable the victim to confront life and situation with a positive mindset. All forms of rejection and condemnation of the victim should be avoided in order not to make the victim remain in the traumatic situation (Collins, 2007).

Presentation of the Tables, Interpretation of the Data and Discussion of the Findings

The table below shows the respondents' view on the trauma counselling received by women victims, the respondents' view on the impact of the integrative approach of trauma counselling, the views of youth on their personal opinions or solutions on how the integrative trauma counselling approach may strengthen women in the North- Eastern part of Nigeria, especially in Michika, and Pastors' responses on how the church could be repositioned to offer integrative trauma counselling

Analyses of Women's respondent's responses to Integrative Trauma Counselling Approach

Trauma Counselling Received by Women Survivors

Respondents' view	Frequency	Percentage
Physical	9	15.3%
Social	9	15.5%
Spiritual	15	25.4%
Cultural	21	35.5%
All of the above	5	8.5%
Total	59	100%

The opinions of Women who responded regarding the specific needs that trauma counselling should address are shown in the above table. Both physical and social needs which have nine (9) respondents representing 15.3% agreed that the trauma counselling they intend to get should address their requirements. Fifteen (15) respondents representing 25.4% agree that the trauma counselling they intend to get should address their spiritual requirements. Twenty-one (21) respondents representing 35.5% believe that trauma counselling should take their cultural requirements into account, whereas five (5) respondents representing 8.5% believe that trauma counselling should take their physical, social, spiritual, and cultural needs into account.

Integrative Approach of Trauma Counselling

Respondents' view	Frequency	Percentage
Reintegration	12	20.3%
Spiritual empowerment	18	30.5%
Mental stability	18	30.5%
Physical healing	11	18.6%
Total	59	100%



The opinions of women respondents on how the integrative approach to trauma counselling is most likely to assist women in managing in the wake of Boko-Haram are shown in the above table. According to twelve (12) respondents representing 20.3% integrative trauma counselling will help the women to reintegrate back into society. Eighteen (18) respondents representing 30.5%, integrative trauma counselling will aid in their spiritual empowerment. While eleven (11) respondents representing 18.6% believe that integrated trauma counselling will aid in their physical healing, eighteen (18) respondents representing 30.5% believe that integrated trauma counselling will aid in their mental stability.

The Views of Youths on their Personal Opinions or Solutions on how Integrative Trauma Counselling Approach would strengthen Women in the North- Eastern part of Nigeria, especially in Michigan.

Respondents’ view	Frequency	Percentage
Spiritually	3	15%
Physically	4	20%
All	13	65%
Total	20	100%

The table above shows that three (3) of the youth respondents representing 15% of the population opine that integrative trauma counselling will strengthen them spiritually. Four (4) of the youth respondents representing 20% of the population sample say that integrative trauma counselling will strengthen them physically. Thirteen (13) of the youth respondents representing 65% of the population sample say that integrative trauma counselling will strengthen them both spiritually and physically. This depicts that integrative trauma counselling has both a physical and spiritual effect on the victims.

Pastors’ Responses on how the church could be repositioned to offer integrative trauma counselling

Respondent’s View	Frequency	Percentage
Training Personnel in Trauma Counselling	2	12.5%
Counselling Programs	4	25%
Security	2	12.5%
The church must be united	6	37.5%
Intervention by Gov’t/NGO/INGOs	2	12.5%
Total	16	100%

The table above shows that two (2) respondents representing 12.5% of the population sample of pastors opine that the church can be repositioned to offer trauma counselling by training personnel in trauma counselling. Four (4) respondents representing 25% of the population sample of pastors opine that the church can be repositioned to offer trauma counselling by putting in place trauma counselling. Two (2) respondents representing 12.5% of the population sample of pastors opine that the church can be repositioned to offer trauma counselling by providing security. Six (6) respondents representing 37.5% of the population sample of pastors opine that the church can be repositioned to offer trauma counselling by being united, while two (2) respondents representing 12.5% opine that the church can be repositioned to offer trauma counselling by getting intervention from Government, NGOs and Ingested unity of the church is the fastest and very important means to offer trauma counselling to the victims.

Discussion of the Findings

From the tables, it is evident that the integrative trauma approach is an effective form of counselling among others. It is clear that the cultural and spiritual needs of the women are met more than the others using the approach of integrative trauma counselling. Twenty-one (21) respondents representing 35.5% believe that trauma counselling should take their cultural requirements into account while fifteen (15) respondents representing 25.4% agree that the trauma counselling they intend to get should address their spiritual requirements. The integrative approach of trauma counselling helps the women to cope with spiritual endowment and mental stability more than others, for eighteen (18) respondents representing 30.5%, integrative trauma counselling will aid in both their spiritual empowerment and mental stability. The integrative trauma counselling approach strengthens women in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria, especially in Michika both spiritually and physically because thirteen (13) of the youth respondents representing 65% of the population sample say that integrative trauma counselling will strengthen them both spiritually and physically. This shows that truly, the integrative trauma counselling approach is the best model to use for traumatized people. The church believes that unity among the churches is the best way that the church can be repositioned to offer integrative trauma counselling, six (6) respondents representing 37.5% of the population sample of pastors opine that the church can be repositioned to offer trauma counselling by being united. Offering church programs to bring awareness will also go a long way.



Conclusion

This paper has discussed the Integrative Trauma Counselling Approach: An Effective Counselling Approach on Women Victims of the Boko Haram Insurgency in Michika, Adamawa State, Nigeria. This work has revealed how Nigeria for so many years has been experiencing several forms of insurgency which in one way or another hurts the citizens and the economy of the nation. The artificial form of insurgency that has been experienced in Nigeria which in so many ways has been involved in the destruction of life and property is majorly caused by Boko Haram. Trauma is an unpalatable experience which could be caused by natural disasters that take place at times suddenly but their effects could be severe causing damage or disorder in the body affecting the physical, spiritual, emotional, social and mental states of people. The practical steps used in counselling traumatic people as discussed in this work are listening, safety, narration, intervention and affirmation.

The integrative Trauma Counselling Approach has strengths and advantages over other approaches in the following ways, it is a combination of more than one approach, it makes use of scientific treatment, it helps children recover from Adverse Childhood Experiences, it empowers women and it has a sustaining ability. In addition, Ibenwa (2011) encourages faithful believers groups to not withdraw their support of providing necessary materials or needs of life to those who are victims of insurgencies. Therefore, academic institutions should develop a more systematic understanding of women in conflict and crises in Nigeria. Church leaders should organize dialogue with the government organization and women victims for mutual understanding and respect for each other and also, the church should adopt integrative trauma counselling for them.

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