Counselling Service Intervention for Gender and National Security in Delta State

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Abstract

The study examined counselling services as an intervention for gender and national insecurity in Delta State. Insecurity in the nation forms a major caption on our dailies and social media and it is taking a greater tool on its citizens. The greatest challenges to peaceful coexistence in Nigeria is insecurity of life and property as violence on gender (female) is prominent in the face ethno-religions crisis and political violence. The female gender is navigated to the background and attacked more often by her male gender who see them as weaker vessels. Considering their innate potentials as people who are mostly involved in farming, petty trading and more makes them to be at various locations where they can be easily attacked. The assumption that they are weaker vessels has left them open to rape degradation, inequality and lack of opinion. Counselling women who have being threatened or faced insecurity in their community could give them emotional, mental health and physical support. Mental health counselling through the use of effective communication channels can be effective in order to address security challenges by considering issues like unemployment, good governance, education and proper orientation on political activities. Counsellors should make themselves available and organize seminars in places were cases of violence occurs. Counsellors could work with the churches, mosques, youth groups and the elders of the community to see that the women are given assurance to live their lives in whole.

Keywords: Insecurity, gender, counselling, political, violence.

Introduction

Security is the state of being free from danger or threat such as freedom from danger: safety, freedom from fear or anxiety. Security can also mean safety as well as the measures taken to be safe or protected. Security can also mean such as: safety, protection, defense, safeness shelter, refuge, shield and guardianship that a person may need or is entitled as a citizen of a nation while insecurity is the opposite. Insecurity could occur as a reault of war, kidnapping, insurgencies, and herdsman encroachment. Nigeria and Delta State in particular is going through one or more forms of insecurity for the past ten years, there has been reports of herdsman raping, killing, maiming and kidnapping in recent time in Ohoror, Isoko, Ukwale to mention but few. Women who have suffered one or more of the herdsmen brutalities are passing through truamatic disorder like anxiety, suicide, depression and withdrawal from social engagements. National security is a body of council nominated by the president to advise him on the state of security of the nation as well as promogating policies that cut across the federal agencies. This paper will be discussing the counselling interventions for gender and national security.

According to the Oxford dictionary gender is male sex or the female sex, especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones, or one of a range of other identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female. According to world health organization, gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed, which includes the norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy as well as relationships with each other. Gender is quite different to sex which is referred to as different biological and physiological characteristics of females and males which features chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. Counselling is a wonderful and valuable tool in treating all kinds of mental health disorders and substance addiction. According to Johnson (2019), counselling is used as a therapy modality applied in different methods and variations which employed professional counsellors to help persons with different mental health. Gender influences people's experience and access to health care, security and needs, gender inequality and discrimination faced by women and girls put their well-being and security at risk, women and girls often face greater violence and insecurity than men and boys. The barriers include restrictions on mobility, lack of access to decision-making power, lower literacy rates, discriminatory attitudes of society and attacks. Women and girls face unwarranted high levels of violence which is rooted in gender insecurity.

Peace and stability are the bedrock of an ethno-religious strive in any nation it will also hinder growth and development in a nation like Nigeria. Security provides the atmosphere to new value system and ethnic relation that increase discipline and moral growth. According to Achimugu (2000) he believes that education and peaceful harmony play a vital role in eliminating existing harmful ethnic practices, harmful religious practices and attitudes which constitute obstacle to peace and stability. Acts of religious crisis was witnessed in the city of Kaduna in 2022 where a student named Deborah was stoned to death by Muslims fanatics who accused her of blasphemy to their Islamic religion and so many other incidences that happened in the north, these are ethnic-religious crisis that lead to series of other killing and riot in the city. During these periods mentioned there is insecurity of life and property as christians ran away from their homes for fear of being killed (murdered). Over the years in Nigeria communal conflict and religious conflict has been recorded in places like Taraba, Sokoto, Benue, Jos, Shagamu, Kafanchan, Kano and many other parts of the northern parts of Nigeria. The term gender is considered and identified as the vulnerability of both woman and man. Insecurity is a worrisome situation that has brought concern to citizens of a country especially Nigeria.

Counselling

Counselling has been defined in diverse ways by many authors, however, an attempt will be made to look at some of these definitions with regards to counselling women who are victims of insecurity. Akenade, Sokan and Osarenren (1996) see counselling as an open and less instructive method of assistance in which alternative are laid down counsellors before the client/counsellee and final decision is left for him/her to take. Olayinka in (2012) sees counselling as the process whereby a person is helped in face-to-face interaction. Counselling is a professional assistance given by a

counsellor, which takes place in a one-to-one or group interaction to sort out solutions to troubled persons who cannot cope alone. The counsellor is a professional worker whose training and experience have qualified him to help others reach solutions to various types of personal difficulties. Hence, counselling can be viewed as a helping process, organized

and designed to assist the clients in their troubled situations and decision making. Counselling is a process whereby the counsellor help others by encouraging them to overcome challenges and ambitions and to also take a better decision in order to overcome those challenges. Apart from assisting their client to make a better decision, the counsellor also make the client to understand himself and be able to adjust to whatever situation or condition they find themselves in a positive attitude in their environment. Counselling is a medium through which clients are assisted with the process of interview. In cause of this interviews there is a cordial relationship which must exist between the counsellor and his client. In the process of counselling the counsellor must show a deep sense of empathy towards the client, in so doing the client will be very relaxed to open up completely to the counsellor during the counselling process. Counselling is given to every person who is going through one challenge or the order. For the purpose of this article the intervention of counsellors to gender in the face of insecurity in Delta State is considered, hence there is a need for counsellors' intervention to assist people to make connections between their society and emotional life and how to overcome anxiety, depression, trauma and suicidal instincts as the aftermath of attacks.

Concept of Gender

The term gender is considered and identified as the vulnerability of both woman and man. According to World health organization gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls, or boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. Gender as a social social construct also varies from society to society and can as well change from time to time. Gender is a hierarchical contruct which produces inequality that intersect with other factors of discrimination, such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability, age, geographical location, gender identity and sexual orientation, among others. The interaction with gender role especially the woman is crucial to the insecurity of the nation as the women gender are more prone to rape, kidnap and ritual killings.

Concept of insecurity

Insecurity is a feeling of uncertainty, danger or threat to life. According to Hassan (2014), insecurity is a feeling involving fear, anxiety, uncertainty and injustice, among others. When a people do not have control over a challenging situation but has to rely on the cooperation of others that cannot be guaranteed it may lead to frustration or insecurity. Insecurity is a threat to peaceful living in a society like Delta State. Persistent conflict within the communities often affects the female gender who are mostly the target of rapist, kidnapping and ritual activities. To Komolafe and Bukola (2013) insecurity is a state of not being safe and protected, a situation where there is no freedom from

danger and anxiety. It is also looked at as inability of the society or particular nation or community to live together without acrimony.

The Nigerian state exist and is liable to the protection of its citizens life and properties. The Nigerian government and other related agencies are responsible to the well-being of the individuals in their specific localities or rural dwelling. However, kidnapping, armed robbery, cultism, political thuggery, assassination, religious crisis and communal rivalry has showcased the insecurity in the nation, Nigeria. Udoh (2015), gave the definition of insecurity as the state of subjecting individual to danger and injury by others. Okana in Ogwa (2021) also defined insecurity as the state of fear or anxiety accruing from alleged lack of protection. In view of this study insecurity is looked on as a higher rate incidence that result to deaths, psychological and emotional trauma experienced by individual and their families in different parts of Nigeria.

Nigeria is divided into six (6) geo-political zones. These geopolitical zones are saddled with their own type of insecurity as the case maybe. According to Onyishi (2011), it was revealed that in the south-south the fear of kidnapping is the ultimate, while rape and ritual killings are mostly the secondary effect or result of kidnap of the rich and the poor are not spared in the kidnapping episode. If peradventure a rich man is kidnapped the family might end up paying for ransom while in some other cases they could be killed and their vital organs used for ritual purposes by cultists. In the south-west armed robbery and ritual killing are on the high side, the individual could be depossessed of his/her valuables and also be killed and vital organs taken for ritual purposes. The North central is not spared as the region is also bedevilled with the activities of herdsman insurgencies who leach their evil activities on farmers and village settlement. The various forms of insecurity in Nigeria range from the following and others political violence, ethno religious crisis, economic manifestation etc. Udoh (2015) gave credence to the above assertion when he argued that various forms of insecurity are manifested in violence, terrorism and in many other forms.

There are numerous effects of insecurity in the society and it ranges from, loss of lives and property; the displacement of people from increasing tensions in inter-community relations; development of culture violence, and many more. Insecurity in the society mostly affect the weaker ones and most cases it is the woman and children who suffer most. It is confirmed that exposure to events that are so extreme or severe and threatening, the people demand en extraordinary coping efforts, which many lack in them. In many cases such development to leads to the death of the abused persons, hence the intervention of the counsellor is most needed to assist such individuals to cope and see meaning to life again.

Insecurity as a situation among people is caused by different factors depending on the types, people involved as well as the circumstances involved in the situation. Some of the factors responsible for the rising insecurity in Nigeria and Delta State in particular are; unemployment, school drop-outs, poverty, under development, bad leadership, poor parental care and upbringing, rural/urban migration, sudden changes in the structure of the society and many more (Dange & Kilgori, 2014).

Politics violence as a catalyst of Insecurity

Right from the restoration of democratic rule, ethnic identity and mobilization in the Nigeria political landscape has resulted in political instability which has brought about insecurity nationwide. The level of insecurity witnessed during the democratic period is considered to be higher than the three decades of the military rule that ended in 1999. The level of insecurity in Nigeria does not spare any gender (male of female) as both are brutally affected by ethnic and religious crisis.

The Nigeria polity has been bedevilled by so much violence and killings in the recent time. Political stability cannot strive without security and safety. The past election showed threat, anxiety all over the nation. Onyishi (2011) opined that inter and intra political conflicts have become the order of the day. Politicians have resorted to using every valuable means and resources to out-do each other. They resorted to changing the legislative and regulations rules to suit their political ambitions not minding the consequences of their actions on the citizens. As witnessed in some other election periods and particularly the March 2022 presidential election, political campaign has become a war zone where brand of arms were freely used to silence opponents.

Economic Incorporation

A state can be stagnated if the economy is threatened with the issues and insecurity, hence the economic growth and development of any nation cannot be attained where there is no peace and guaranteed security. The development of a nation, state or community depends on the level of peace and security assured in the areas. In recent times Nigeria and the rural settlements in Delta State has witnessed unprecedented plague of crisis and insecurity. It is reported that farmers are not safe to go to their farm work because of the attack on them by herdsmen who release the cattle on the produce to be destroyed and when they are challenged it leads to killing and destruction of farm produce. The insecurity in Nigeria has resulted to provision of palliatives by the government to ease the hardship meted on the citizens.

The citizens (female) of Delta state especially those in the rural area have been attacked by the cattle herders who insist on feeding thier crops to the cows. The women of north, south and Ndokwa have been raped, maimed and killed for refusal to allow the fulani herdsman to feed the cattle on the farm produce. These occurrences caused so much insecurity in the community as women no longer go to their farm without escorts. The inability of the women to go to their farm without escort resulted to scarcity and high price of farm produce. Women who could not withstand the shame of being raped, maimed and assaulted in one way or the other need the intervention of counsellors to help them overcome their traumatic experiences.

Status of Counselling Services

Counselling is the act of assisting someone who knows better than you counsell (advice) an individual who is going through some challenges either emotionally, socially and mentally to be able to cope and overcome the situations. Counselling nefore now is done by pastors, chiefs and others

who may have gone through some challenges as the counsellee. However, the role of counsellors has grown beyond what our mothers, pastors, chiefs and elders used to do, hence the idea of counselling must follow the ways of professionalism. According to Burke in Salawu (2023), counselling means a professional relationship between a trained counsellor and a client. Counselling interventions is done be a professional counsellor and a client usually one-on-one, and it could also be more than one or group of persons as the case may be.

Counselling intervention is designed to help clients to understand and clarify their view about life space and to learn to reach their self determined goals through meaningful, well-informed choices and through resolution of problems of emotional or interpersonal nature. Looking at the activities of counselling in countries like America and Britain who have achieved the criteria of a standard counselling profession there is still so much to be achieved in Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) as it is still struggling to attain that professional standard.

Type of counselling intervention

Counselling is a process designed to help clients understand and learn to clarify personal views of their life space in order to reach resolution of problems with emotional or interpersonal nature, (Fareo, 2020). In the same vein Ndum and Onukwugha (2013) believed that every human being is endowed with the potential for self-growth and self-actualization. Counselling helps the individual to grow to a greater maturity by allowing the individual to take responsibility and make well informed decisions on their own. Atsue (2019) opined that counselling provides an individual with the opportunity to change unhelpful patterns which he/she harbours and to examine how to tap into the client's existing resources or to further develop new ones in order to allow better and more satisfying emotional and social functioning. In a society filled with religious and ethnic intolerance, counselling can help individuals who are less tolerant to achieve greater awareness not only about who they are but what they can become in the future.

In the midst of the insecurity experienced by the citizens of Nigeria and Delta State in particular counselling intervention strategies can be used to ensure people's wellness, rounded development and make them to cope with various life situations in order to achieve peace, harmony and unity in the human society. Counselling services guide, inform, direct and assist people to make the right choices, adjust and solve problems relating to insecurity and also ensure peace. According to Odemelan and Uwani (2009), the individual could be assisted to understand and ensure security in Nigeria. The counselling interventions will include but not limited to the following:

1. **Education:** On a normal bases every counsellor is suppose to understand effective security management skills which will enable the counsellor to teach people how to take precautions for security such as having a community security plan, and how to make contact in the event of an emergency. Community heads are to be encouraged to give achievable reassurance to their citizens on how to overcome insecurity by working together and setting up formidable security outfit.

There is also a need to establish more training institutions for different health care professionals to increase the workforce on psychiatry and mental health support professionals.

2. **Group Counselling:** A counsellor can engage in group counselling for various groups and association who value the norms of gender protection (female).

3. **Stimulate Community based Interventions:** counselling interventions do focus on emotional insight and behaviour changes. The emotion and practical issues should be addressed by counsellors as they are necessary in handling the issue of insecurity. Women who peradventure are raped maimed or their husbands killed should be given support such as housing and employment.

4. **Empowering Community Intervention:** Counsellors are to work with churches, mosque, youth groups, seminar, citizens' club to manage insecurity in their community by giving financial, physical and emotional support to people who may have suffered one or other form of insecurity challenges. The can brings encouragement, support, healing and help to one another and to their communities at large.

Implications for Counselling on National Security

Counselling is a wonderful and valuable tool in treating all kinds of mental health disorders and substance abuse. According to Johnson (2019) counselling is used as a therapy modality applied in different methods and variations that can be employed to help persons with different mental health disorder.

Counselling interventions are applied in the following:
Behavioural intervention: this is a counselling interaction in clinical care are those activities delivered by primary care clinicians and related health care staff to assist patients or clients in adopting changes or maintaining behaviours proven to affect health outcomes and health status.
An intervention is an effort by individuals (professional counsellors) or groups (CASSON) caring for the well-being of someone who is either in need of help yet refuses it, or is unable to initiate or accept help.
A counsellor rendering intervention must maintain in the forefront by professional who care and respect for clients. To uphold and integrate into the plan of care for all of the clients' personal values and beliefs, without exceptions to support the client.
Despite any and all biases, values, beliefs and opinions of counsellors, the client is the center of care, not the counsellor.
Challenges of Counselling

The field of guidance and counselling has a crucial role to play in shaping the lives of individuals and providing them with necessary support and guidance to make useful and impactful decisions and to also overcome personal challenges. In Nigeria and Delta State in particular however, the field of guidance and counselling faces numerous challenges that hinder its effectiveness. In this paper some of the challenges will be discussed according to Nyabora (2023):

1. Shortage of qualified counsellors, there are a few professional counsellors who can meet the pressing need of the people hence the intervention is not visible.

2. Awareness in the rural areas: Most people in Nigeria are not aware of the benefits of seeking professional counselling as they view the idea as a sign of weakness and they also believe that mental health issues are not real thereby assuming their mental health as spiritual attacks.

4. Limited access in Rural Areas: Rural communities in Nigeria lack the access to professional counselling services which maybe primarily be due to geographical barriers and inadequate infrastructure. They find it difficult to reach counsellors because they mostly dwell in the cities and they do not have the financial means to access professional counsellors.

5. Inadequate collaboration between stakeholders: in order to have effective counselling intervention there is the need for collaboration between stakeholders such as NGO's, government bodies, education authorities, counselling associations and health care providers. There is often a lack of coordination and synergy among these entities hence there is fragmented efforts.

6. Cultural and Religious Barriers: Cultural and religious beliefs pose significant challenges to acceptance and implementation of guidance and counselling. Some individuals hesitate to seek counselling due to the fear of being judged especially when they are raped during conflict, there are also conflicting beliefs or cultural norms that discourage the discussion of personal problems openly.

7. Individual differences: Individuals differ in their educational, religious, socoal and psychological life. No two persons possess the same attributes; hence the counsellor is mandated to explore avenues through which they can meet the counselling needs of members of the public who might have the same challenge. Therefore, counsellors are obliged to deal with the challenges of providing individual therapy based on the attributes of the persons involved.

Conclusion

The field of guidance and counselling faces numerous challenges that hinder its effectiveness and reach to the rural women who are mostly victims of violence in times of conflict. Considering the importance of security to political, ethno-religious harmony and economic growth in Nigeria and Delta State in particular the need for increase role of counselling is paramount. There is need for Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) to establish its own ethical standards which will serve as guidelines for counsellors and provide the basis for accountability and evaluation.

The major effect of insecurity is poverty which can be related to unemployment, illiteracy and proper laws guiding the acts of security and peace. The essence of counselling for gender and insecurity is to assist the individuals and people to understand their environment and to play the expected roles that could lead to peace, stability and harmony in Delta State. To achieve peace and security calls for effective counselling strategies that could assist victims to settle down.

Suggestions

1. Counsellors and clinical psychologist have significant role to play in giving awareness to the citizens especially women on the causes of insecurity and how to cope in the menace of insecurity through education as well as identifying health practices and culture that will shape and encourage the people now, in their future life styles.
2. NGO's should collaborate with counsellors to organize seminars to speak to women who are facing trauma due to their encounter with herdsman.
3. Counsellors associations members should make themselves available to interven whenever the need arises to help the victims live a normal life without the feeling of guilt and shame due to the attack on their person.
4. Counselling centres should be established at various religious worship places, Local Government Headquarters and Communities cèntres in order to promote tolerance and peace among different religious organizations and ethnic groups in the State.

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