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**Predicting the Effect of Counselling on the  
Psychological Adjustment of Boko Haram Victims  
in Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

*This study was carried out to predict the effect of counselling on the psychological adjustment of the victims of Boko Haram. A study of some selected victims in Suleja, Niger State and Jos in Plateau State, Nigeria. One hundred and twenty victims were purposely randomly selected. Three research questions and three hypotheses were raised for the study. A validated questionnaire tagged Counselling and Psychological adjustment questionnaire (CPAQ) was the only instrument for data collection which was later analysed using t-test statistical tool at 0.05 level of significant. Based on the findings, recommendations were made.*

## Introduction

Prior to the 1967 Biafran War, Nigeria was relatively peaceful, with this war causing a dichotomy between the North, South East and West of Nigeria. This war lasted for four years after which there has been a relative peace.

Militants and youth restiveness are cover stories of dailies in Nigeria and some parts of the world today. Webster (2000) defines a “militant” as someone who engages in fighting, and is aggressive in support of a cause He also defines “restiveness” as “having too much energy to be willing to remain at rest or to submit to control; resisting control, uneasy or beginning to show displeasure”.

Militant and youth restiveness began in 1980 with the Maitasine attacks on other religious figures, the police force and the Nigeria army. Armed clashes led to the deaths of around 5,000 people, including Maitasine himself (*Sunday Trust*, 2010). After Maitasine’s death, Musa Makaniki succeeded him and continued the activities for several years until 1985 when he retreated to Cameroun. He remained there until 2004 when he was arrested in Nigeria (*Sunday Trust*, 2010).

The Niger Delta Conflicts started in the 90s between the foreign oil corporations and a number of Niger Delta’s minority ethnic groups who felt that they were being exploited, most especially the Ogonis and the Ijaws. This problem continued till 2007. Competition for oil wealth has fuelled violence between many ethnic groups, causing the militarization of nearly the entire region by ethnic militia groups as well as Nigerian Military and Police Forces. Several measures were taken to resolve the militancy problem but all were in vain until 26th June, 2009 when Late President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua granted amnesty and an unconditional pardon to militants in the Niger Delta which lasted for 60 days beginning from 6th August, 2009 to 4th October, 2009. He signed the amnesty deal after consultations with the National Council of State. During this period, armed youths were required to surrender their weapons to the government in return for

training and rehabilitation by the government (BBC News 2009, retrieved 23-04-2011). The training is still on. After this, Nigerians then enjoyed peace, until the recent insurgence of Boko Haram.

Book Haram which is termed the bloodiest militancy against the innocent citizens, started in 1995. The group was said to be operating under the name Shabaab, Muslim Youth Organization with Mallam Lawal as the leader. When Lawal proceeded for further education, Mohammed Yusuf took over the leadership of the group. Yusuf's leadership allegedly opened the group to political influence and popularity (Johnson, 2011).

Yusuf officially founded the group in 2002 in the city of Maiduguri with the aim of establishing a Sharia government in Borno State under former Governor Ali Modu Sheriff. In the year 2002, Ali Modu Sheriff was then a senator (Johnson, 2011). He established a religious complex that included a mosque and a school where many poor families across Nigeria and from neighbouring countries enrolled their children (Farouk, 2012).

The centre had ulterior political goals and as well was working as a recruiting ground for future Jihadist to fight in the state (Farouk 2012). The group includes members who came from neighbouring Chad, Niger and speak only Arabic Language (BBC 2009). In 2004, the complex was relocated to Yusuf's home state of Yobe in the village of Kanamma near the Niger border (Aljazeera, 2009).

The activities of militants in Nigeria have become a source of nightmare to the ordinary Nigerian; many people who went out in search of their daily bread never returned. Everyone especially in the northern part of Nigeria is living in perpetual fear of bomb blast and kidnapping and many people suffer from psychological instability.

### **The Concept of Counselling**

The concept of counselling denotes a wide range of procedures including advice giving, support in times of trouble or need, encouragement, information giving and test interpretation. Dictionary

definition stresses advice and mental exchange of ideas. Counselling could be defined as the process by which counsellors help counsees to define their goals, clarify their values and change their attitudes and behaviour so as to solve their problems (Falaye 2009). Blocher (1966) defines counselling as helping an individual become aware of himself and the ways in which he is reacting to the behavioural influences of his environment. It further helps an individual to establish some personal meaning for this behaviour and to develop. In a nutshell, counselling services is the basis for human existence. In counselling the client's emotion, feelings are of serious concern. It is the counselling services that have evolved the guidance programmes which has made many writers to define guidance as the assistance given to individuals to help them understand themselves, their world and to make intelligent adjustments and choices (Kolo, 2006).

### **Adjustment**

The term adjustment refers to harmonious relationship between the person and the environment through which his needs are satisfied in accordance with the social demands. Behaviour that conforms to the societal demands and expectations are called adaptive behaviour while maladjustment is the individual's inability to fit in with the environment arising from conflict such as militancy activities, Boko Haram, e.t.c. These happenings have made many victims to experience a post traumatic stress disorders (PTSD). A state of anxiety, depression and psychological "numbing" that follows immediately or much later; exposure to serious trauma, example bomb blast, armed robbery, military combat, rape, war, conflict accidents or horrifying experiences that are beyond normal everyday occurrences in the life of a typical person. Such traumatic experiences may leave recurrent, intrusive recollections and nightmares of the events in the minds of the observers.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Adjustment in a given society becomes a necessary ingredient for meaningful development. Therefore the maintenance of socio, and

psychological adjustment of Nigerians rely on professional guidance and counsellors need to come to the aid of the Boko Haram victim for proper adjustment to the Nigeria Society.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to predict the effect of counselling on the psychological adjustment of Boko Haram Victims in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

- (i) Does counselling help in psychological adjustment of Boko Haram victim?
- (ii) Does counselling help in the perception of the victim?
- (iii) Can Nigeria overcome the Boko Haram problems?

### **Hypotheses**

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There will be no significant difference in the psychological consequences of Boko Haram victims based on their gender.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There will be no significant difference in the perception of counselling intervention for Boko Haram victims based on the age of the respondents.

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** There will be no significant difference in the psychological adjustment of the Boko Haram victims after counselling.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The design for this study was a descriptive one from which a survey approach was adopted. This was adopted because it involves systematic method of collecting data from a defined area and it involves collection of necessary information that present a good picture of the phenomenon.

## **Population**

The target population of this study were bomb blast victims of Suleja and Jos. The total population were not known; the researcher sampled one hundred and twenty (120) purposively from the three churches that experienced the Boko Haram bomb blast.

## **Instrumentation**

A self-developed validated questionnaire tagged Counselling and Psychological Adjustment Questionnaire (CPAQ) was the main instrument for data collection. The instrument has two sections. Section A contained demographic data of the respondents while section B consisted 10 items on counselling and psychological adjustment. The instrument was mailed to the clergies of the concerned churches, which was later returned.

## **Validity and Reliability**

Questionnaire (CPAQ) was given to the experts in the field of counselling psychologists in the field of assessment and evaluation for corrections and suggestions. The purpose of this is to ensure face and content validity of the instrument for the reliability, split-half method was adopted. This method measured the internal consistency of the instrument Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used in analyzing the result while reliability coefficient of 0.72 was obtained. This indicated the suitability of the instrument.

## **Data Analysis**

Data obtained were analysed using simple percentage and student t-test statistics while each hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significant using t-test.

## Results

**Table 1:** Effects of Counselling Services on Psychological adjustment of Boko Haram victims

S/No	Items	SD	D	A	SA	% Agree	% Disagree	Total
1.	I can only manage my emotion now.	20	15	23	62	71	29	120
2.	Still I cannot relate very well in the society.	70	10	12	28	33	67	120
3.	I am not sure if I can still make in life.	62	23	21	14	29	71	120
4.	The counselling has impact in my life.	03	07	24	86	92	8	120
5.	I am still thinking about my lost during the bomb blast.	65	15	18	22	33	67	120
6.	I strongly believe that Boko Haram will kill everybody in Nigeria.	60	25	20	15	29	71	120
7.	I cannot go to any gathering again because of Boko Haram.	68	30	12	10	18	82	120
8.	Counselling helps people to overcome their problems.	10	15	25	70	79	21	120
9.	I don't believe in counselling.	85	25	10	20	25	75	120
10.	I don't think Nigeria can conquer Boko Haram issue.	70	20	15	15	25	75	120

**Research Question 1:** *Does counselling helps in the psychological adjustment of Boko Haram victim?*

Information on table 1 shows answers to research question one. Looking at items 1 and 2 of the table, it has been revealed that 71% of

the respondents agreed that counselling helped in their psychological adjustment while only 29% disagreed that counselling did not help them.

**Research Question 2:** *Does counselling help in the positive perception of the Boko Haram victims?*

This also shows in item 3 which states that I am not sure if I can still make it in life. 71% of the respondents disagreed with this negative perception while only 29% agreed that they can no longer make it because of what happened.

**Research question 3:** *Can Nigeria overcome Boko Haram problem?*

In answer to item 10 of the questionnaire, 75% of the victims disagreed with the perception that Nigeria cannot overcome this problem while only 25% believes that this problem will continue and Nigeria cannot overcome it.

**Hypothesis 1:** This hypothesis states that *there will be no significant differences between psychological consequences of Boko Haram base on their gender.*

**Table 2:** Differences in Psychological Consequence of Male and Female

Variable	N	X	SD	t.table	t.crit	df
Male	90	119.83	14.00	0.19	1.98	118
Female	30	118.6	14.00			

The table above, affirms hypothesis one that states that there will be no significant difference between psychological consequence of male and female victims since t.table is 0.19 which is less than t.crit 1.98 hence the hypothesis is accepted.

**Hypothesis 2:** States that *there will be no significant differences between the perceptions of Boko Haram victims based on their age.*

**Table 3: Differences between counselling intervention based on their age.**

Variable	N	X	SD	t.table	t.crit	df
Below 30	80	118.14	12.59	1.85	1.98	118
Above 30	40	123.16	16.12			

Table 3 shows that there will be significant difference between the perceptions of counselling intervention of victims based on their age the t.table 1.85 is less than t.crit 1.98. This indicated that the hypothesis 2 was accepted.

**Hypothesis 3:** States that *there will be no significant difference between the psychological adjustment of male and female Boko Haram victims.*

**Table 4: Differences in psychological adjustment of male and female victim**

Variable	N	X	SD	t.table	t.crit	df
Male psychological adjustment	64	121.59	11.88	1.53	1.98	118
Female psychological adjustment	56	117.70	15.97			

The above table indicates that the hypothesis raised which states that there will be no significant difference between male and female in their psychological adjustment after counselling. T.table was 1.53 which is less than t-crit 1.98. In this case, the null hypothesis raised was accepted.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The first hypothesis states that there will be no significant difference between the psychological consequence of male and female victims of Boko Haram. Talking about psychological consequence of these

victims, both male and female victims suffer from the same psychological trauma. This is in line with Farouk (2012) who claimed that the activities of militant in Nigeria have become a source of nightmare to every citizen both male and female because many that have gone to search for their daily bread have become their victims and never returned.

The second hypothesis stated that there will be no significant difference between perceptions of counselling intervention based on their age. Going by the age of the Boko Haram victims, the findings revealed that regardless of their age they all benefited from counselling intervention. These activities brought them back to consciousness while some of them have overcome the shock experienced during the incident. This finding collaborated Falaye (2009) who found that counselling is a helping profession which makes an individual to become aware of himself and the way in which he is relating to the behavioural influences of his environment.

Hypothesis 3 stated that there will be no significant difference between psychological adjustments after counselling. This showed that counselling has great impact on their psychological adjustment. This findings is in line with Pitman (2000) who ascertained that accidents, horrifying experiences that are beyond normal everyday occurrences of a typical person, such traumatic experience may re-occur intrusive recollections and nightmare of the events in the minds of the observers. Kolo (2006) found that counselling is an assistance rendered to individuals to understand themselves, their world and to make intelligent adjustments.

### **Implication**

The role of counselling in the management of behaviour cannot be neglected. This is because a counsellor is the only professionally trained person who possesses the personal and professional skills required in managing such behavioural problem. Unfortunately many Nigerians do not recognize the roles of counsellors.

### **Recommendation**

The following recommendations were made:

- (i) Counselling is a humanitarian career and as such counsellors should be involved in helping the militant victims for their psychological adjustment.
- (ii) Each church should have a counsellor who can assist the members in case there is a problem.
- (iii) Government should appoint counsellors and send them to rehabilitate these victims.
- (iv) Government and the populace should assist these victims through kind and cash.

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