



Influence of communal conflicts' trauma on victims' moral adjustment in north – eastern, Nigeria: Implications for mental health

Joshua Wasani¹, Kahinde Garba Hussain², Esther Luka Gidimi³

¹ School of Vocational and Technical Education, Abubakar Tatari Ali Polytechnic, Bauchi, Nigeria

² Faculty of Technological Education, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi, Nigeria

³ School of Education, Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education Kangere, Bauchi, Nigeria

Abstract

The study investigated the effect of communal conflicts' trauma on victims' moral adjustment in North – East Nigeria. The research questions and six null hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Population of the study consisted of all 1,770,444 victims from the six States in North – East Nigeria. The sample size of 605 or 10% of the population was selected using stratified proportionate sampling in the area of study. Data was collected using a self – developed questionnaire titled: Communal Conflicts' trauma on Victims' Questionnaire' (CCTVQ). The data collected from the trial study was subjected to statistical analyzing using Cronbach alpha and the result yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.96. while data collected from the sample size was analyzed using the mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. Chi – square was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that communal conflicts' trauma has significant effects on victims' peace building and victims' tolerance to other people. Based on the results, recommendations were that trauma counselling centers should be established at the local government area level with trained counselors and psychologists in order to provide trauma counselling services in order to enhance emotional intelligence adjustment of trauma victims of communal conflicts in North-Eastern Nigeria. It was also recommended that counselors and psychologist should help trauma victims via trained programs such as organized teaching to develop adequate resilience skills such as self – esteem and problem solving skills develop life goals among others.

Keywords: communal conflict, trauma, victims, moral adjustment, north – east, mental health

Introduction

Conflicts of different dimensions with devastating influence on people have become a common phenomenon affecting the socio-economic and political stability of many communities in North East, Nigeria. In the world today, humanities are faced with challenges to peaceful co-existence and attainment of meaningful socio-economic and political development. One of the various challenges is communal conflicts which have posed a serious threat affecting peace and development. In North-East Nigeria, like other parts of Nigeria, political stability and the socio-economic development have been characterized by increasing number of communal conflicts and the devastating traumatic influence on the victims. Communal conflicts can be seen as involving two or more communities engaging themselves in disagreement or act of violence over issues of common interests and needs, such as, claims for land ownership, religious and political differences leading to loss of lives and destruction of properties.

Communal conflicts seem to be motivated by the elites who manipulate politics in order to serve their personal political interests, socio-cultural differences and divergent interests by communities in a defined social and physical environment (Ubi & Gwamna, 2012) ^[13]. These elites appear to have interest in traditional chieftaincy titles, struggle for scarce resources, farmlands and boundary disputes. Nigeria has continued to witness widespread communal conflicts resulting to loss of lives, destruction of properties worth millions of naira, just as people are being displaced and resettled in camps. Instances of communal

conflicts in Nigeria in recent time. (Barder, 2011; Adeyemo, 2015).

Communal conflicts, according to Tor-Anyiin (2013) ^[12], can be seen as a fight or disagreement over the pursuit of divergent value, goals, interests, needs or aspirations between communities. The author further opines that the disagreement usually starts between two people using primordial sentiments and later embraces families and the entire communities which results to fighting against each other. Communal conflicts are conflicts that occur between two or more communities that are involved in a disagreement on certain issues of both interest and concern. Communal, ethno-religious conflicts and violence in Nigeria have become a common feature in Nigeria's contemporary society. Persistent communal conflicts have continuously attracted more attention and pose a threat to peaceful co-existence and stability of most geo-political regions in Nigeria and other Nation.

Furthermore, Dzurgba (2006) is of the opinion that communal conflicts are the conflicts that occur between two or more communities over territorial or land boundary, farmland and territorial water for fishing. According to Wilmot, Hocker and Mohammed (2001), communal conflicts in most cases have become highly violent in nature and imposed insecurity in communities where they exist, thus subjecting the victims to traumatic life experiences and challenges of varied dimensions. The conflicts have devastating influence on the victims' traumatic life, such as hopelessness, unforgiving hearts, intolerance, hostility, anger, retaliation, frustration. They also have influence on

the livelihood of the victims as they reduce and sometimes even end the source of livelihoods of the victims affected by the conflicts (Boer, 2003) ^[2].

1. Moral Adjustment

Moral adjustment refers to the individual's ability to strike a balance between what is right or wrong, and what is due for him or her, and what is due to other people, (Morgan and Skitka; 2011). All normal stable human societies or communities exist on the basis of certain accepted moral or ethical values and norms that govern and control the general behaviours of the people. These norms regulate behaviours of the people in order to ensure the survival of the community and the nation. According to Okobiah and Okorodudu (2006), individuals who form the communities vary in behaviours, which could be maladjusted or undesirable. Haidt (2001) contends that morality is social in this sense to a considerable extent and it is largely socially in its origins, sanctions and functions. Thus, morality is an instrument of the society as a whole for the guidance of the individual and the community's survival. Morality is defined as an instrument of the society as a whole, as the individual, the family and the social class cannot have a morality or moral action guided of its own that is different from that of its society (Narvaez & Lapstey, 2009).

The three component structures of Freud's theory of personality, the id, ego and superego are always in battle or series of conflicts and cannot be separated in human moral behaviour (Passer & Smith, 2001). The id operates solely on moral pleasures and principles regardless of societal beliefs or laws and outside the reality of the world. The Ego meets the demands of societal reality and strikes a balance between the demands of Id and Superego. The superego is the conscience or moral arm and involves the teachings of the individual's family and culture, ethics, moral values and norms (Oladele, 2004) ^[9]. The individual morally comes to know what is right and wrong so that he/she can adjust and act according to the societal moral standards and to behave in a socially acceptable way.

Moral adjustment fosters good motives and channels the individual's behaviour into more socially acceptable outlets. Based on ego-moral adjustment principles, it keeps a person working for a living, getting along with people and generally adjusting to the realities of life situations. Morgan, King, Weisz and Schopler (2011) ^[6] reported that Freud characterized the ego as working in the "service of the reality principle". That is, the ego tries to satisfy the person's id urges or desires for pleasure, but only in the realistic ways that takes into consideration what is possible in the real world.

2. Conflicts Trauma on Victims' Tolerance

The concept of tolerance has been defined by different authorities in different ways. According to Szacki, tolerance is an attitude of acceptance of others who may hold and advocate different views, but also follow the lifestyles of a person. Being tolerant, therefore, means not only an awareness of diversity, but also the individual exhibiting positive attitude towards the others, openness to the other as well as willingness to respect and support diversity in others.

The term tolerance is defined by Marsella (2010) ^[5] as the appreciation of human beings regardless of their particular conditions and actions as involved in outgoing efforts that

justify the values, views, respect the beliefs of other people and their conduct. Tolerance, as moral adjustment intervention, is based on the ability of the individual to appreciate and respect an individual's identity, character, ideals or even shared way of life. It is the disposition to allow freedom of choice and behaviour without discrimination. Furthermore, tolerance is an ethical value aimed at the adherence to the spirit of equality, respect, recognition, accommodation, greater institutional accommodation and adjustment.

The States in the North -East Nigeria namely: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe Taraba and Yobe are becoming increasingly more heterogeneous because of population explosion and settlements within the region and the influx of immigrants from other states.. Consequently the emergence of persistent communal conflicts and their traumatic influence on the victims have greatly affected the citizens' live and living. This is due to the levels of intolerance between the various people and the communities in North-East, Nigeria and the nation in general.

Tolerance, therefore, reveals positive attitude by which people or individuals perceive or understand that some groups have customs, cultures, values and interests that are different from their own and unsuitable to them, but such people or individuals do not allow their personal dislikes or likes to interfere with the general principles of rights, and needs interests of other people. Tolerance adjustment strategy is a fundamental element and a component for peaceful co-existence. It is very crucial and important to victims' adjustment that have been traumatized as a result of communal conflicts in the North-East, Nigeria. Despite the traumatic impact of victims and differences, tolerance adjustment strategy could bring reconciliation in relation to the restoration of hope and cordial interpersonal relationship. It thus, builds on a mutual acceptance and in cooperative manner.

3. Communal Conflicts' Trauma on Victim's Peace Building

Bahati (2009) defines peace - building as a direct work or effort that is intentionally focused on addressing the factors driving or mitigating factors. Based on these definitions from authorities, it could be seen that peace building is a concept that describes different interrelated efforts or activities by different individuals, organizations and the community in order to enhance and sustain peaceful co-existence: Brown (2008) points out that, the concept peace-building was found in 1992 and 1995 editions of *An Agenda for peace*", proposed by the former UN-Secretary General, Boutros Ghali. Boutros-Ghali's 1992 reports proposed a new framework to manage international armed conflicts. Brown stresses further that the concepts peace-keeping, peacemaking and peace-enforcement have been replaced with a broader approach of peace building efforts. The concept "peace building", therefore, refers to a wide range of activities that are associated with capacity building, reconciliation and societal transformation, with a major focus and concern for restoration of the broken human relationship.

Peace-building, therefore, in a broad view, refers to its early warning and response efforts, conflicts prevention, advocacy work, humanitarian assistance and welfare services and reconciliation in order to prevent and reduce the traumatic influence on the victims' life.

According to Yamsat (2010, March 30) ^[14], peace is never a cheap commodity that comes or is offered without efforts. It demands great efforts and sacrifice. The author believes that before communities and individuals attain peace, it requires and demands great efforts and pains. The efforts are required from people and involve physical, psychological, moral social and emotional efforts. Moreover, those who have not known what it cost, to make peace available to people, hoard and mismanage it to themselves and find it difficult to share it with others who are badly in need of it. Trauma on the victims’ life threatens peaceful co-existence between the victims and non-victims in north east Nigeria. Traumatic influence on the victims’ life experiences could ferment envy, suspicion jealousy, hatred and hostility with mutual distrust and enmity between communities. The absence of peace is manifested in the victims’ life peace-building. Therefore, it is needed to restore inter-personal relationship in the community. Peace building intervention in this study is aimed at preventing and restoring more stable and peaceful co-existence in the victim life. Peace building is an important intervention set of inter-related effort that support and promote peace in the communities and the North-East, Nigeria in general.

Research Methodology

The study used ex-post-facto research design. Toluhi (2001) posits that ex-post-facto design is undertaken after the events have taken place and the data are already in existence. The population of this study was 1,770,444 victims in the six States; Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe consist of all the victims of ethnic communal conflicts that are resettled in several areas in the North-Eastern Nigeria.

The sample size of the study comprised 605 respondents. In order to determine the minimum sample size for the study, an internet based sample size calculator was used (Creative Research Systems, 2014). The sample size was selected using a proportional and random sampling techniques from the population of 1,770,444 victims in the six States in North-East Nigeria.

1. Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire, titled: Communal Conflicts’ Trauma and Victims’ Questionnaire (CCTVQ). It is divided into two Sections, A and B. Section ‘A’ and B measured the variables of peace-building and tolerance to other people. Each section consists of 5 items that were adopted in order to generate the variables of the study. The items were scored on a 4-point likert scale modified on a continuation of strongly agree (SA) (4), Agree (A) (3), Disagree (D) (2), and Strongly Disagree (SD) (1). The respondents were required to tick (√) against the appropriate column based on their choice. The cut off point for analysis of the respondents’ responses to the instrument stands at 2.50 for the study. The data was analyzed using simple percentage, mean and standard deviation to answer the two research questions. While chi – square test of goodness was used to analyzed the two hypotheses for the study

Research Question 1: Does communal conflicts’ trauma influence victim’s tolerance to other people?

Table 1: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation to find the Influence of Communal Conflicts on Victims’ Tolerance to other People

Item No.	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Sd.	Decision
1	I always show much concentration about people’s needs in my community.	269	211	84	41	3.17	0.91	Agreed
2	Internal dialogue and group forgiveness are ways of reducing intolerance experiences.	271	235	45	54	3.20	0.92	Agreed
3	It is always good to respect peoples’ beliefs in one’s community.	230	215	78	82	2.97	1.03	Agreed
4	I maintained friendly relationship with my neighbours	201	239	95	70	2.95	0.98	Agreed
5	Interaction with friends and other people in my area helps me to forget my traumatic life challenges.	201	285	67	52	3.05	0.89	Agreed
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation						3.07	0.95	Agreed

Source: Field work, 2019

Table 1 indicates that the mean ratings of respondents for items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were 3.17, 3.20, 2.97, 2.95 and 3.05 with their corresponding standard deviations as 0.91, 0.92, 1.03, 0.98 and 0.89 respectively. All the items have value above 2.50. This means that they accept that communal conflicts’ trauma has influence on victims’ tolerance to other people. The cluster mean of 3.07 with the

corresponding standard deviation of 0.95 was also above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that communal conflicts’ trauma has influence on victims’ tolerance to other people in North-East, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: How does communal conflicts’ trauma influence victims’ peace building?

Table 2: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation on the Influence of Communal Conflicts on Victims’ Peace Building

Item No.	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Sd.	Decision
1	Lack of peace in my community often makes me unhappy	210	271	66	58	3.05	0.92	Agreed
2	The level of discrimination I experience makes me feel aggressive to other people around.	254	141	156	54	2.98	1.02	Agreed
3	I often like to participate effectively in making peace with neighbours.	197	240	102	66	2.94	0.96	Agreed
4	My community at the grassroot is often involved in resolving conflicts for the attainment of peace.	240	237	68	60	3.09	0.95	Agreed
5	I am willing to forgive people for the past offences committed against me.	234	239	66	66	3.06	0.96	Agreed
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation						3.02	0.96	Agreed

Source: Field work, 2019

Table 2 showed that the mean ratings of respondents for items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were 3.05, 2.98, 2.94, 3.09 and 3.06 with their corresponding standard deviations as 0.92, 1.02, 0.96, 0.95 and 0.96 respectively. All the items have mean value above 2.50. This indicates that they accept that communal conflicts' trauma has influence on victims' peace building. The cluster mean of 3.02 with the corresponding standard deviation of 0.96 was also above the cut-off point

of 2.50. This implies that the communal conflicts' trauma has influence on victims' peace building in North-East, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1: Communal conflicts' trauma has no significant influence on the victims' tolerance of other people.

Table 3: Chi Square test on the influence of Communal Conflicts' Trauma on Victims' Tolerance of other People

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Level of Sig.	df	χ^2-cal	P-value	Decision
SD	59	151.3	-92.3	0.05	3	190.71	0.00	Sig.
D	74	151.3	-77.3					
A	235	151.3	83.8					
SA	237	151.3	85.8					
Total	605							

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 151.3.

Table 3 shows that $\chi^2 = 190.71$; $df = 3$ and $p = 0.00$. Since the p-value of 0.00 is less than the set alpha-value of 0.05, ($p < 0.05$) at 3 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis is thus not accepted. This means that communal conflicts' trauma

has significant influence on victims' tolerance of other people among victims in North-East, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: Communal conflicts' trauma has no significant influence on the victims' peace-building.

Table 4: Chi Square test on the Influence of Communal Conflicts Trauma on Victims' Peace-Building

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Level of Sig.	df	χ^2-cal	P-value	Decision
SD	80	151.3	-71.3	0.05	3	114.53	0.00	Sig.
D	92	151.3	-59.3					
A	206	151.3	54.8					
SA	227	151.3	75.8					
Total	605							

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 151.3.

Table 4 reveals that $\chi^2 = 114.53$, $df = 3$ and $p = 0.00$. Since the p-value of 0.00 is less than the set alpha-value of 0.05, ($p < 0.05$) at 3 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis is therefore, not accepted. This means that communal conflicts trauma has significant influence on victims' peace building in the North-East, Nigeria.

Discussion

Ho₁. The findings of this study showed that communal conflicts' trauma has significant influence on victims' peace-building in North-East, Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with Akume and Fidelis (2005) who conducted a study on managing communal conflicts for political stability in Benue State and found that peace building is a vital approach as it focuses directly on the victims who are practically involved in conflict. In addition, the finding of the study confirms Oladimeji (2014) who found that peace-building will assist the conflicts' victims to create grassroots peace environment and positive feelings for each other. The finding of this study is in agreement with Akindele and Ate (2001) and Presler (2011) ^[10] who contended that peace-building create general condition when the victims of communal conflicts' trauma restore inter-personal relationship. The empirical evidence from this study and literatures from authorities has clearly revealed that communal conflicts' trauma has significant influence on victims' peace-building in the North-East of Nigeria. The finding of this study is justified because communal conflicts' trauma affects victims' peace-building greatly as victims' response to trauma experiences through their feelings of mistrust, hatred, retaliation which affect their relationship with one another. Furthermore, victims could be

seen withdrawing from day-to-day normal activities of their communities. In addition, it weakens and damages the existing peaceful-coexistence between victims and non-victim from one community and another. Peace-building intervention strategy could be used to assist communal conflicts victims to create and maintain healthy interpersonal relationship between the victims and non-victims in the community to restore peace and respect for each other in the community.

Ho₂. The finding of this study further revealed that communal conflicts' trauma has significant influence on victims' tolerance of other people in North-East Nigeria. This finding supports Joshua, Kori and Shehu (2015) who found that tolerance contributes to peaceful coexistence and cordial relationship among people despite the traumatic feelings. The finding also agrees with Landau (2010) who found that tolerance intervention and good parenting serve as a protective factor for traumatic children and youth exposed to post conflict experiences. This also in agreement with Sing (2004) and Ostein (2009) who assert that tolerance is vital for the promotion of peaceful-coexistence in the context of increasing diversity as well as to raise the awareness of ethnic and community attitudes which in turn contributes to a greater tolerance and openness to others. From the foregoing, it is obvious that tolerance intervention strategy would facilitate and integrate people towards the socio-economic and political development of the families and communities. The finding of this study has justified the fact that communal conflicts' trauma has significant influence on victims' tolerance to other people in North-East, Nigeria. The justification of this finding is on the basis of communal conflicts' trauma influence on victims'

tolerance to other people as the victims often express denial of rights and things of interest to others most especially to the minorities. As a result, tolerance intervention strategy could be used to help the victims to share their traumatic experiences freely with other people. It could further enhance friendly relationship, respect and recognition of the rights of others and avoid being withdrawn from other people in the community.

Counselling Implications

From the findings of this study, therefore, there is need for an effective organization and coordination of counselling services for communal conflicts victims that experience traumatic life challenges and problems in the family, community, local government area and the North East, Nigeria; thus the counselling implications include:

There is need for effective utilization of Rational Emotion therapy which is essential for counselling trauma victims of communal conflicts. The therapy will assist in correcting and changing the illogical and irrational thoughts, beliefs and views of communal conflicts' victims that experience trauma life challenges, thus changing their illogical thoughts for positive adjustments and their well-being.

Counselling for compensation and resettlement of properties destroyed. The counsellors can help the victims in obtaining appropriate compensation for their lost and destroyed properties. The counsellor could liaise with competent authorities to recover and compensate the victims of their lost properties.

Counselling and rehabilitation of depressed victims that are psychologically traumatized in order to attain full emotional stability, free from fears and anxiety in the community.

Counselling victims and non-victims for peaceful co-existence in the community irrespective of religious affiliation, ethnic, tribe and political inclination through tolerance, mutual acceptance, respect and trust for one another in the community and North-East Nigeria. Moreso, counsellors should organized peace talks in communal conflicts areas to assist trauma victims to appreciate the need for living in peace and exhibiting tolerance behaviours with other people in the community.

Enhancing effective counselling services by counsellors in conflicts areas as a vital weapon for entrepreneurship empowerment of victims such as youth, widows, children and adults for positive adjustment, and meaningful contribution for community development rather than been use for the conflicts' leading to killings and destruction of properties in the communities in North-East, Nigeria

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of communal conflicts' trauma on victims' psycho-moral adjustment in North-Eastern, Nigeria. Based on the results of the study, it was concluded that communal conflicts' trauma has significant influence on victims' peace-building and victims' tolerance to other people.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Trauma counselling centers should be established at the local government area level with trained counsellors and psychologists to provide trauma counselling to enhance wellbeing of victims and non –victims for moral adjustment in the North East sub – region and Nigeria in general.

2. Counsellors and psychologists should organize programmes such as organised teaching to develop victims' peace building in order to provide them with problem solving skills and develop life goals.
3. Counsellors, teachers, community and religious leaders and the local government authorities should embark on joint comprehensive social support services and programmes to provide trauma victims with capacity skills training, finance, healthcare and counselling services.
4. Counsellors and psychologists with support of the local government authorities should set up grass root, peace-building committees for managing communal conflicts and counselling services where trauma victims can contribute meaningfully for peace-building process in the communities.
5. Counsellors/psychologists, women groups in collaboration with youth development associations should jointly carry out advocacy counselling programmes, and workshops on promotion of tolerance for communal conflicts' trauma regardless of their religious, ethnic, socio-economic and political backgrounds.

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