

**FACTORS INHIBITING TRAUMA INFORMED COUNSELLING IN
TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS AS PERCEIVED BY COUNSELLOR
EDUCATORS AND POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN
NASARAWA STATE UNIVERSITY, KEFFI.**

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Abstract

Trauma-informed counselling is a counselling intervention that ensures individual mental wellness and emotional well-being, especially the ability to cope with life challenges. The Researchers, therefore, deem it necessary to beam light on the Case study on the factors inhibiting Trauma-Informed counselling in Nigeria's Tertiary Institutions, as perceived by post Graduate students of Counselling Psychology and Counsellor Educators in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. Fifty- five postgraduate students and nine counsellor educators were the population and sample size used for the study in Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The instrument employed to generate data for the study was a questionnaire. The Questionnaire was tested using Criterion Mean and standard Deviation. To give direction to the study, two research questions were raised. It was found that lack of Experts in Trauma counselling, nonchalant attitude of counsellors in Advocating for Trauma-informed counselling, management of Counsellors' Trauma experience and mental wellness among others were the factors inhibiting Trauma Counselling in Tertiary Institutions. It was, therefore, recommended that Trauma Counselling should be included in the Curriculum of both undergraduate and postgraduate students in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria and also Trauma counselling should be incorporated into the services rendered in Nigeria's tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Trauma, trauma counselling, mental well-being, tertiary institutions and suicide.

Introduction

Counselling is a helping profession that assists counselees to redirect their goals and solve either their social or psychological problems (Ekechukwu, 2016). One of the aims of counselling is to ensure the general wellness of clients. Among the areas and concerns of guidance and counselling is mental wellness, though it is not as prominent as other areas of guidance and counselling, especially in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. According to American Counselling Association (2014), mental wellness is the state of emotional well-being, especially in connection to one's outlook in life, ability to cope with life challenges or the absence of a mental disorder. Trauma counselling on the other

hand is one of the interventions to ensure individual mental wellness(Onyemelukwe, 2016).

Collens (2013) defines trauma as the physical, emotional and psychological responses when a person experiences a high level of fear or stress without having the chance to escape or move away. It is a stress response that remains frozen in time within the person Jordan (2014). Traumatic experiences could alter the pattern of life, which invariably may cause changes in the way a person interprets the life and even reconstruct his/ her life. Consequently, it is necessary for a better understanding of trauma multidimensionality and complexity to minimize its consequences and possibly manage the effects. This can be done by paying particular attention to the probable determinants before trauma and creating prompt action and appraisal strategies after trauma (Knight, 2014).

Trauma, from a counselling point of view, can be seen from two angles. First, it is necessary to improve the adroitness of psychological wellness professionals to deal with trauma as a unique area of specialisation. Also, awareness of counsellors' distressing exposure helps counsellors to perceive their distress for positive contribution to counselling expertise through the blossom processing of these exposures since a distressing event can be any stressful event that an individual has difficulty adjusting to afterwards (Collens, 2013).

According to McCann (2019), Trauma Counselling assists an individual in distress conditions to come to an awareness of their distressing situations and thus get over the distress. Trauma counselling is an intervention used for a person that suffered a traumatic incident. It is meant to support the client or victim in recognizing and accepting the feelings and emotions he has in the course and post-traumatic experience.

The Nigerian tertiary institution students are at a critical transition in their lives, since most of them leave home for the first time and find it difficult to live a solitary life in the school. They are faced with a sense of personal freedom, unlike what was obtainable in their former secondary schools. The undergraduate students are also confronted with social and academic challenges such as free expression, social interaction and a high level of intensive academic activity, which they need to adapt to some others suffer from drug addiction, failed relationships, loss of parents, fear of kidnapping, insecurity, banditry, poverty etc. According to Punch Newspaper (2017), a lot of suicide cases had been reported in tertiary institutions and the number has been increasing rapidly from 2017 to date. For example, Aduba Daniel, a student of the Niger Delta University in Bayelsa State, was said to have committed suicide because he failed four courses. It was also reported that due to emotional pressure, Miss Mercy Afolaranmi, a student of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, equally committed suicide by drinking rat poison mixed with battery extracts. Besides, there are a plethora of cases of suicide among students in Nigerian universities and abroad a case of, Omojola Ogundipe, at Bristol University in the United Kingdom, and Auwal Haruna of the Nigerian Law School suffices here. (*Vanguard Newspaper, 2019*).

Okebukola (2019) lamented the high spate of suicide among tertiary education students in Nigeria and blamed the trend on a host of factors, which he categorized into internal and external to the University. The internal factors, according to Okebukola (2019) include poor achievement in academics the resultant effect of which is withdrawal from the University, bullying by peers, particularly by members of cult groups, and abject poverty. Factors external to the University

include inherited suicide tendencies, family bereavement, which may adversely affect the University education of the student and parental pressure to marry outside the student's choice. The rising suicide rate in Nigerian universities could however be checked through counselling and the introduction of a General Studies course, which will include topics that should discuss the demerits of suicide, as well as preaching against suicide in places of worship on campus (Okebukola, 2019).

According to the World Health Organisation/ World Health Organisation of Family Doctors (WHO/WONCA) (2018), the public health issue of trauma illness in students has reached the zenith and has been widely neglected. Trauma-informed disorders are increasing rapidly. The general implication of trauma-informed disorders is expected.

Trauma-informed disorders are increasing rapidly. The general implication of trauma-informed disorders is expected to reach 15% by the year 2025. By that time, it is assumed that common psychological ailments such as depression, anxiety and substance abuse-related disorders, will cause more handicapping conditions to many people than complications arising from AIDS, heart disease, accidents and others (Ministry of Health, 2016). This surprising data portend danger and call for questions as to why trauma-informed counselling is not receiving enough attention as it presently receives especially in our tertiary institutions.

Students' mental wellness needs, like trauma-informed counselling, are capable of posing a great threat to socio-economic and educational development if allowed to be neglected (Onyemelukwe, 2016). Counsellors are expected to play an important role in assisting students to get over the trauma and the signs they could be experiencing, and help process traumatic events that they have suffered and develop ways to adjust to resulting emotions. They are also to provide a grounded presence, where the students can begin to explore their trauma, while feeling safe and listened to. Counsellors/counselling psychologists are to provide information, observe abnormal/maladaptive behaviour or trauma disorderliness, intervention, and referral services to students and other staff of the institution (Collens, 2013). Meanwhile, it should be noted that school counsellors are not long-time therapists, yet, they can assist in fostering the environment where trauma-informed awareness is created. However, despite having counsellors in Nigerian institutions, most of the Guidance and Counselling Units are yet to properly practice trauma-informed counselling to assist the students to overcome their fear and destructive behaviour as a result of past experiences. This has led the students to suffer various psychological disorders and some even commit suicide.

It is, therefore, imperative to identify the factors inhibiting trauma-informed counselling in Nigeria tertiary institutions as perceived by postgraduate students of counselling psychology and counselling educators. The postgraduate students are students studying Masters or Ph.D. in Counselling Psychology in Nigeria tertiary institutions, while their lecturers in Counselling Psychology are referred to as Counselling Educators.

Statement of the Problem

There is a need for Trauma counselling in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. As a matter of fact, an estimated 20%–30% of Students in Nigeria's tertiary institutions' populations are believed to suffer from trauma-informed disorders, ranging from depression, anxiety, and phobia, obsession, psychosis and suicide. Counselling is a helping profession and to an extent has what it takes to initiate Trauma counselling in various Institutions but the program is yet to be incorporated into

Counselling activities in schools.

It is, therefore, necessary to explore the perceptions of Counselling Educators and Counselling Postgraduate students on what is affecting the practice of trauma-informed counselling in Nigeria tertiary institutions and strategies that can be used to put things in place; hence, the need to examine the factors inhibiting trauma-informed counselling among students in Nigeria's tertiary institutions.

Purpose of the study

1. To identify the factors inhibiting trauma counselling as perceived by the counselling Educators and Counselling Psychology Postgraduate students.
2. To find out the strategies to be adopted to enhance effective trauma-informed counselling in Nigerian tertiary Institutions.

Research Questions

1. What are the factors inhibiting trauma-informed counselling as perceived by the counsellor Educators and Post-graduate Counselling students?
2. What are the strategies that will enhance effective trauma-informed counselling in Nigerian tertiary institutions?

Significance of the Study

The information gathered by the study would assist the counselling administrators in tertiary institutions to incorporate Trauma counselling into the Curriculum of Guidance and counselling services in tertiary institutions and adopt strategies that will enhance its effectiveness.

Methodology / Design

The study adopted a Case-study research design.

Area of Study

The study was carried out at Nassarawa State University, Keffi.

Population of the Study

The population of the study was fifty-five (55) Counselling Psychology Postgraduate students in Master's Degree and Ph.D levels, and (9) Counsellor Educators (Lecturers) in Nassarawa State University, Keffi. Postgraduate students were used because they graduated from university for their first degree and they are counsellors so they have the prime advantage of identifying the issues of trauma-informed counselling in tertiary institutions. Also, they will talk from the experience of being teachers and trained counsellors.

Sampling and Sampling Techniques

The purposive Sampling Technique was adopted. Counselling/Counselling Psychology students (Masters and Ph.D.) 2018/ 2019 academic session 55 in number and 9 lecturers educating the students.

Table 1: Sample Size

S/N	STUDENTS	N
1	Masters Postgraduate Counselling students	22
2	Masters Postgraduate Psychology students	11
3	Ph.D. Postgraduate Counselling students	15
4	Ph.D. Postgraduate Psychology students	7
Total		55

Research Instrument

The major instrument employed to collect data for this study was the researcher's self-developed questionnaire. The Questionnaire was patterned on a 4 – point scale of Likert type, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The positively worded items were scored as SA – 4, A – 3, D – 2 and SD – 1. On the other hand, the negatively worded items were scored in the reverse order. The instrument is divided into three sections – Section A sought information on the personal data of the respondents. Section B has 10 items on factors inhibiting trauma-informed Counselling in Tertiary Institution tagged (FITCTI) and section C is made up of 10 items on Strategies for Enhancing Trauma-informed Counselling, tagged (SETCTI).

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The validity of the instrument was done by two-three experts, one each from Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation in Federal College of Education Zuba, Abuja. A consensus mean score of 0.89 was arrived at. Also, the questionnaire was administered to 20 sample size that is different from the used sample size. After 4 weeks, the questionnaire was re-administered. The scores of the two administrations were correlated, using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation method. The reliability index of coefficient of stability obtained was 0.80. This suggested that the instrument was reliable as it was found to be stable over time.

Method of Data Collection

The FITCTI and SETCTI were administered to all the Postgraduate students and Lecturers in counselling/counselling psychology at Nasarawa State University Keffi. The questionnaires were collected immediately after administration, all the questionnaires were returned.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The criterion for the acceptance and rejection of responses was 2.50.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the factors inhibiting trauma-informed counselling as perceived by the Counselling Educators and Counselling Postgraduate students?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Counselling Educators and Counselling Post Graduate Students Perceived Factors Inhibiting Trauma Informed Counselling in Nigeria Tertiary Institution.

S/N	Items on factors inhibiting trauma-informed counselling	Counselling Educators N = 9			Postgraduate students N = 55		
		\bar{X}	SD	Decision	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Lack of experts to handle Trauma Counselling	3.35	0.55	Agree	3.00	3.20	Agree
2	Working on course llor Trauma Experience and Mental wellness	2.85	0.76	Agree	3.46	0.54	Agree
3	Lack of license trauma counsellors	3.16	0.56	Agree	3.25	0.58	Agree
4	Counselling activities are not well - funded	2.88	0.67	Agree	3.40	0.56	Agree
5	Lack of awareness of Trauma counselling	3.20	0.57	Agree	3.33	0.55	Agree
6	The Counselling curriculum is Ineffectively implemented	2.68	0.67	Agree	3.40	0.56	Agree
7	Insufficient full time Counsellors	2.52	0.78	Agree	2.60	0.68	Agree
8	Lack of technical skills Needed for Trauma-Informed Counselling	2.60	0.67	Agree	3.30	0.55	Agree
9	Nonchalant attitude Towards Advocating for Trauma -informed counselling	2.62	0.73	Agree	3.00	0.77	Agree
10	Lack of interest by the Undergraduate	2.40	0.69	Disagree	2.20	0.81	Disagree

Table 1 presents the perception of counselling educators and that of counselling psychology postgraduate students on Factors Inhibiting Trauma Informed Counselling in Nigeria Tertiary Institution. The Table shows that all items from 1-9 have means that are higher than the benchmark of 2.50. The implication is that the respondents agree that statements 1-9 are factors inhibiting Trauma Informed counselling in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Both the Counselling Educators and Postgraduate students rated Lack of experts in Trauma counselling, Counsellors' personal trauma experience and mental wellness, lack of license for Trauma counselling, poor funding of counselling activities, Lack of awareness of Trauma-Informed counselling, poor implementation of counselling activities, insufficient full-time counsellors, lack of needed technical skills and nonchalant attitude towards advocating for Trauma-Informed counselling as factors inhibiting trauma-informed counselling in tertiary institutions. Item 10 was rated below the criterion mean of 2.50 by both categories of respondents. They disagree on lack of interest by graduates as an inhibiting Factor.

Research Question 2: What are the strategies for enhancing trauma-informed counselling as perceived by counsellor Educators and postgraduate Counselling students?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Counsellor Educators and Post Graduate Students Perceived Strategies for enhancing Trauma Informed Counselling in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions

S/N	Items on factors inhibiting trauma-informed counselling	Counselling Educators N = 9			Post graduate students N = 55		
		\bar{X}	SD	Decision	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Lack of experts to handle Trauma Counselling	3.88	0.48	Agree	3.50	0.58	Agree
2	Working on counse llor Trauma Experience and Mental wellness	3.40	0.55	Agree	3.68	0.48	Agree
3	Lack of license trauma counsellors	3.80	0.50	Agree	3.80	0.53	Agree
4	Counselling activities are not well-funded	3.70	0.52	Agree	3.80	0.53	Agree
5	Lack of awareness of Trauma counselling	3.58	0.53	Agree	3.80	0.52	Agree
6	The Counselling curriculum is Ineffectively implemented	3.55	0.52	Agree	3.60	0.53	Agree
7	Insufficient full time Counsellors	3.29	0.57	Agree	3.80	0.52	Agree
8	Lack of technical skills Needed for Trauma-Informed Counselling	3.40	0.56	Agree	3.30	0.55	Agree
9	Nonchalant attitude Towards Advocating for Trauma-informed counselling	3.72	0.52	Agree	3.05	0.55	Agree
10	Lack of interest by the Undergraduates	3.55	0.50	Agree	3.68	0.52	Agree

Table 2 presents the perception of counselling Educators and counselling Psychologists postgraduate students on strategies for enhancing Trauma Informed Counselling in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions. The Table shows that the respondents agreed on all the items as strategies for enhancing Trauma Counselling in Nigeria's Tertiary Institutions, namely, training of counsellors as experts in Trauma counselling, counsellors obtaining a license in Trauma counselling, creating awareness of trauma counselling, adequate funding, creating centres for trauma counselling, incorporating Trauma counselling in Counselling Curriculum, employment of full-time Counsellors, exposition of Graduate students to trauma counselling and organization of programs on the management of trauma.

Discussion of Findings.

The results of data analyses agreed that lack of experts, lack of proper awareness, need for a license in Trauma Counselling, lack of technical skills needed in Trauma counselling, counsellor's personal Trauma experience and mental wellness and so on, are some of the factors inhibiting trauma counselling in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This is in support of Adams and Riggs (2018), in their work, "an exploratory study of vicarious trauma among therapist training", they opined that some counsellors do not know they are experiencing trauma and as such cannot assist others until they begin to verbalize their life events with other counselling experts. Trippany (2014) in his work,

“preventing vicarious Trauma: what counsellors should know when working with Trauma survivors”, opined that among the problems of tertiary institution counselling, are lack of experts and technical skills while Biffi (2013), states that among the requirements of Trauma counselling is educational Training of counsellors, licensure of mental health professionals and handling counsellor Trauma experience.

The study also agreed that part of the strategies to enhance Trauma counselling in Nigeria's tertiary institutions are training counsellors on Trauma counselling, adequate funding for Trauma counselling, recruitment of professional counsellors, creating awareness of Trauma counselling, and creation of trauma counselling centres and so on. This result supported the findings of Tosone (2018), who in his work, “shared Trauma: when the professional is personal” opined that counsellors with a mental health orientation can help someone who is battling in response to a traumatic experience. The work of Knight (2014) that revealed that adequate funding and licensure of Mental Health professionals are needed to enhance trauma counselling, is also supported by the findings of this present study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is hereby concluded that factors inhibiting Trauma counselling in Nigeria's Tertiary institutions include lack of experts in Trauma counselling, lack of information/ awareness about Trauma Counselling, inadequate funding of counselling activities, and management of Counsellor Traumatic experience, nonchalant attitude of the teacher, and so on. Therefore, from the findings and conclusion reached, it is recommended that:

1. Trauma counselling should be included in the curriculum of Guidance and Counselling students, both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, to enhance their skills in Trauma counselling.
2. Trauma counselling should be incorporated into Guidance and Counselling services in tertiary institutions to enhance effective Trauma counselling in Nigeria's tertiary institutions.

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