

Shortage of Trauma Counsellors and Trauma Therapy Treatment for Nigerian Victims of Insecurity who Survived Kidnapping by Herdsmen-Kidnappers

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the shortage of trauma counsellors and trauma therapy treatment for Nigerian victims of insecurity who survived kidnapping by herdsmen-kidnappers. For the study, a mixed method research approach was used with a sample of 100 victims who were herdsmen kidnapped survivors from communities in northern Nigerian states. The study had two main research questions. Data were gathered through questionnaire and interview. Thematic analysis and pie chart were used to answer the research questions. The findings showed that there was a shortage of trauma therapy models and professional trauma counsellors to assist those who were victims of herders kidnapping in coping and surviving traumatic experiences in northern Nigerian states. Based on the research's findings, it was recommended that more trained counsellors should be employed and made available to help victims by government authorities in the northern Nigerian states and work with the insecurity victims who survived being kidnapped by Fulani herdsmen in order to help the victims develop wholistic coping mechanisms and emotional resilience.

Key Words: Herdsmen Kidnappers, Trauma Therapists, and Trauma Treatment Models.

INTRODUCTION

The word "wound" in Greek is where the word "trauma" first appeared. While both physical and psychic wounding can be considered in relation to wounds, the psychological undertone is the focus of this study. Trauma is a form of unpleasant or unfavourable emotion. It is an emotional reaction to a very bad occurrence that can have such severe effects that it makes it difficult for the person to lead a regular life (APA, 2019). Within the context of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in Tull (2019) defined the elements of trauma as exposure to actual or threatened death, or serious injury, where the exposure may result from situations in which the person: Directly experiences the traumatic event, somebody is present when the horrific incident occurs, learns that a close friend or family member experienced the traumatic occurrence, and experiences firsthand, repeated exposure to, or excessive exposure to, the aversive (unpleasant) details of the traumatic event.

A toxic condition known as trauma is a concoction of extreme fear, total helplessness, and a lack of control (Peichl, 2017). If the psychological effects of traumatic events are not addressed, they may cause memory loss, identity loss, or unconsciousness, which could result in long-term damage. Fearful experiences are greatly influenced by perception. Levine (2015) argued that how a person interprets a situation impacts the kind and scope of the effect it has on them. Trauma happens when a person is overcome by circumstances and reacts by feeling extreme fear and powerlessness. It is a reflection on perspective, demonstrating how two people might react differently to the same horrific event or situation. People seem to make decisions depending on their emotional states—whether they are angry, sad, joyful, dissatisfied, or traumatized—in every aspect of their lives. As a result, the circumstances in which we find ourselves are what set off our emotional state. According to Mangal (2018), the type, situation, and strength of an emotion will determine whether it is constructive or destructive. Negative emotions, he emphasized, are detrimental to a person's growth. Traumatic occurrences include militants' violent and destructive behaviours, such as their wilful murders and kidnappings of innocent members of their communities, as is the case right now not just in north and central Nigeria, but in all of Nigeria. According to Corsini (2022), traumatic occurrences include situations like rejection, divorce, combat,

natural disasters, and racial or religious prejudice. The impact of stress on the brain and its consequent suppression of human behaviours have been studied by psychologists like Scaer (2015). One's coping mechanism may get overloaded if they are constantly exposed to or witness discomfort, go through a traumatic experience, or both. As a result of the overload, troubling events may stay unprocessed or freeze in the brain. The limbic system of the brain stores these unprocessed memories and emotions in a "raw" and emotional form. Traumatic memories are kept by the limbic system in a separate memory network that is linked to emotions and physical experiences. Traumatic memories stored in the limbic system will be reactivated when the person goes through experiences similar to the ones they have already experienced. The memory itself may have been forgotten for a while, but unpleasant emotions like fear, panic, wrath, or despair are constantly brought up in the present, making it difficult for the person to experience the present and learn from new experiences.

Sutton (2022) demonstrates that the sensory overload that occurs during a stressful incident can in fact cause long-term harm to the brain mechanism, confirming the impact of trauma. There is evidence to suggest that altering neurological functions can cause some psychological and physical symptoms that are harmful to human development. Shock, wrath, denial, mood swings, guilt, shame, worry, fear, withdrawal from others, depression, despair, feeling numb, feeling emotionally overwhelmed, and trouble concentrating are some of the symptoms listed. The bodily signs may include aches, pains, weariness, edginess, agitation, nightmares, racing heartbeat, and others.

Statement of the Problem

The current wave of insurgency and insecurity in the northern Nigerian states is worrisome and causing severe suffering to the local communities. The kidnapped-survivor victims of herdsmen kidnappers in virtually all the states in northern Nigeria are a major segment of the populations in these northern Nigerian states who are going through these worrisome and imposing trauma experiences. Kidnappings committed by so-called terrorists and Fulani Herdsmen are just one of the horrifying manifestations of insurgency and insecurity that have wretchedly touched populations throughout Nigeria, and not just the northern states of Nigeria where this study is carried out. This is a very serious problem that has caused millions of people to suffer from severe psychological and mental health issues, which has consequences for counselling and psychotherapy in Nigeria as a whole right now. The most worrisome thing is that poor innocent Nigerians mostly farmers in rural communities have recently become key targets of these herdsmen killer-kidnappers. Yet, the most recent wave of militant kidnappings and deliberate assassinations of poor innocent citizens across the northern Nigerian states as a whole is deeply frightening. Therefore, this study would investigate the shortage of trauma counsellors and trauma therapy treatment for Nigerian victims of insecurity who survived kidnapping by herdsmen-kidnappers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding Insecurity in Nigeria

Insecurity refers to a lack of safety or protection. In Nigeria, insecurity means living in fear of threats like violent attacks, kidnappings, and terrorism. For many Nigerians, insecurity is a daily reality. There's always a chance of danger lurking around the corner. People live on the edge, unsure of what each new day may bring. This constant state of uncertainty and vulnerability leaves deep scars. The effects of insecurity in Nigeria are far-reaching. People hesitate to travel, socialize, or pursue economic opportunities, Businesses struggle, relocate. Livelihoods are disrupted. Trust in the system erodes.

Types of Insecurities in Nigeria

Nigeria is currently facing severe security challenges that are threatening the peace and stability of the country. The major Insecurities in Nigeria identified by Husmansodiq (2024) include:

Terrorism

Terrorist groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP have been carrying out deadly attacks in Nigeria, killing and

displacing thousands of people. These groups routinely carry out bombings, kidnappings, and attacks on security forces and civilians in Nigeria.

Banditry and Kidnapping

Armed banditry and kidnapping for ransom have become widespread in Nigeria. Bandits routinely attack villages and highways, killing people and kidnapping others for ransom. This has created a climate of fear across the country.

Clashes Between Herders and Farmers

Violent clashes between herders and farmers have led to the loss of lives and property in Nigeria. Disputes over land, grazing routes, and water have fuelled tensions between the groups. If left unaddressed, this conflict could further undermine security in the country.

Proliferation of Small Arms

The widespread availability of small arms in Nigeria has enabled the various security threats in the country. There is an urgent need to curb the flow and circulation of illegal arms in Nigeria to improve the security situation.

Cultism

Cultism has become a problem in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. Cult clashes often lead to killings and destruction of properties.

Communal crisis

Ethnic and religious differences have been a source of communal crisis in Nigeria. They are often used to incite violence for political and economic gains.

Piracy and oil theft

Nigeria's waterways have been taken over by pirates who attack ships and steal oil. Their activities have impacted the economy negatively.

Corruption

Corruption remains endemic in Nigeria and has weakened the capacity of security agencies to tackle insecurity effectively. Most security funds end up in private pockets.

Armed Robbery

There have been many cases of armed robbery attacks on homes, vehicles, and banks, leading to the loss of lives and property.

Drug Trafficking

Nigeria is a transit point for drug traffickers smuggling drugs to Europe and other parts of the world. This has led to increased crime and corruption.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

Some of the major causes according to Husmansodiq (2024) include:

Poverty and unemployment: The high level of poverty and unemployment in the country has made many Nigerian youths vulnerable to recruitment into criminal activities.

Ethno-religious conflicts: There are frequent violent clashes between Muslims and Christians in some parts of Northern and central Nigeria. These clashes are often due to disputes over land and economic and political power.

Terrorism: Nigeria faces terrorist attacks, especially in the Northern and central part of the country. The Boko Haram insurgency has led to the loss of lives and properties in Nigeria.

Rural banditry and cattle rustling: There are frequent raids, killings, and stealing of cattle in rural communities in Northern and central Nigeria by armed bandits and cattle rustlers.

Oil theft and piracy: The large-scale theft of crude oil in the Niger Delta region and piracy in Nigeria's coastal waters have contributed to insecurity.

Corruption and weak security agencies: The high level of corruption in Nigeria and the inability of security agencies to curb criminal activities due to a lack of equipment and training have promoted insecurity.

Proliferation of small arms: There is a widespread availability of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria, which end up in the hands of non-state actors who use them to perpetrate violence.

Political thuggery: Politicians often recruit and arm youths to intimidate political opponents, disrupt elections, and protest against unfavourable political outcomes. These youths sometimes engage in criminal activities that promote insecurity.

States experiencing insecurity most in Nigeria

The report on the state of insecurity in Nigeria by Husmansodiq (2024) observed that Nigeria's Northeastern states, especially Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states, have been the most affected by insecurity due to the Boko Haram insurgency. These states have experienced many violent attacks, bombings, and kidnappings by Boko Haram militants in recent years. The militants frequently target schools, markets, mosques, and churches in these states.

Some Northwestern Nigerian states like Zamfara, Kaduna, and Katsina states have also witnessed rising cases of banditry, cattle rustling, and kidnappings. The bandits terrorize villagers, kill innocent people, and kidnap locals for ransom. They also block major highways and attack travelers.

Certain South-South Nigerian states, such as Rivers, Bayelsa, and Cross River states, experience militant activities like vandalization of oil pipelines, piracy, kidnapping, and armed robbery. The Niger Delta militants frequently attack oil installations and kidnap oil workers in these states.

Some parts of North-Central and South-Western Nigeria also experience recurrent clashes between farmers and herdsmen. These clashes often lead to loss of lives and destruction of properties. Examples of affected states are Benue, Plateau, Niger, Taraba, Oyo, and Ogun states.

In summary, the major insecure states in Nigeria are located in the Northeast, Northwest, South-South, North-Central, and South-West geopolitical zones. The insecurity in these states is fuelled by insurgency, banditry, militancy, and herder-farmer conflicts, which have resulted in wanton loss of lives and properties.

Trauma Counselling: Helping kidnapped-Survivor Victims using CBT Therapy

Trauma counselors and therapists are specially trained to provide clients who are traumatized with emotional support. The goals of many trauma counseling models are to assist the traumatized person in making sense of what has happened to them and to enable them to start living in the present rather than being constantly triggered by the past.

Trauma counselling is the emotional support given to clients who suffer from trauma by trained trauma counsellors/therapists. There are many trauma counselling models whose objectives are to help a traumatized

individual make sense of what has happened to him/her and make him/her to begin to live in the present rather than constantly being re-triggered by the past. This study concentrated on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and its application on some of the kidnapped-survivor victims of herder-killer kidnappers that are uncontrollably causing severe havoc and trauma on populations in northern and central Nigeria nowadays. According to Roth & Fonay (2015), CBT is one of the major orientations of psychotherapy and it represents a unique category of psychological interventions because it derives from cognitive and behavioural psychological models of human behaviour. CBT is an eclectic approach to the treatment of psychological problems. It was developed by Aaron Beck and Albert Ellis (David et al, 2018). The aim of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy is to help people identify unhelpful beliefs and thought patterns which are often automatic, negative and irrational, and replace them with more positive and helpful ways of thinking (APS, 2015). In this respect, the thought patterns of the survivor victim of Fulani killer kidnappers in northern and central Nigeria should be identified and the irrational ones be challenged and replaced with positive thought patterns. The thought pattern can be identified through the ABC model of Albert Ellis which is the basic approach in CBT. The ABC is developed on the basis of the understanding that activating event is not the cause of behavioural consequences rather the belief (Oramah, 2022). The ABC model is explained thus

A= Activating Event

B= belief (irrational belief (ib) and rational belief (rb))

C= Consequence (behaviour consequence)

The activating event (A) of the respondents' traumatic experiences are:

1. Witnessed killing of loved ones
2. Directly experienced kidnapping
3. Witnessed rape
4. Directly experience destruction of community properties
5. Experiencing insecurity

The survivor victims of herdsmen killer-kidnappers should be guided to identify their belief (B) for each of the activating event and rate the intensity of such belief. They should detect their irrational beliefs and compare them with rational beliefs and also rate the intensity of each.

(C) Behaviour consequences: The irrational belief will lead to trauma, anger, anxiety, depression, withdrawal, sorrow, defeat while rational belief will earn behaviours such as joy, constructiveness, happiness, pleasure, worthiness, self-confidence etc.

They should challenge the irrational belief by considering alternative beliefs (rational) until they see that their irrational beliefs are losing weight in terms of intensity rating while the rational beliefs are gaining weight. The implication is that the irrational beliefs are false and destructive while rational ones are true/helpful and will not have any negative consequences on their behaviour.

For a successful rating of their beliefs, the daily Record of Dysfunctional Thought (DRDT) form could be given to them to record their daily feelings and thoughts following the exposure to an activating event. They will be given enough time to do so, to make realistic decision from the responses.

The therapist should pay attention to some inferences which may help change the clients' perception of irrational belief. Beck (1979) identified some of them:

Arbitrary inference: The survivor victims of Fulani herdsmen killer-kidnappers may draw some conclusion arbitrarily, which may include a thought that they may die, may not go to their normal daily work again or may be attacked again at the uprising of the insurgency. The listed inferences are based on hypotheses and the reverse could be the case.

Absolutistic thinking: This may result when the individual interprets his experience in extreme way. The

therapist should counsel the survivor victim of insurgency to lessen the effect of their perception of traumatic experiences. Other inferences may include selective abstraction, over-generalization, and changing perspective.

Other Effective Trauma Treatment Therapies

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a novel, empirically supported psychological intervention that combines commitment and behaviour change techniques with acceptance and mindfulness techniques to increase psychological flexibility. It was developed within a coherent theoretical and philosophical framework. Psychological adaptability is completely engaging in the present moment as a conscious human being and, depending on the opportunities presented, altering or maintaining behaviour in support of predetermined values. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, which is based on Relational Frame Theory, sheds light on the ways that language traps people in fruitless battles with their own inner selves. Clients learn how to make healthy touch with previously feared and ignored thoughts, feelings, memories, and bodily sensations through metaphor, paradox, and experiential activities. Clients learn how to accept and recontextualize these intimate events, get better understanding about their own values, and make the commitment to necessary behaviour change.

(Extrapolated from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy)

Somatic Experience (SE)

Dr. Peter Levine created Somatic Experiencing (SE), a short-term naturalistic method for recovering from trauma. It is based on the observation that wild prey animals, despite frequently being threatened, rarely experience stress. In the wild, animals make use of inborn processes to control and release the high levels of energy arousal linked to protective survival activities. These systems provide animals a natural “immunity” to trauma, allowing them to bounce back from intensely "charged," life-threatening situations. According to the notion, a disruption of the autonomic nervous system causes the symptoms of trauma (ANS). The article also makes the claim that trauma weakens the ANS's innate ability to self-regulate, and that using Somatic Experiencing techniques can help restore that ability. A client tracks their own felt-sense experience as part of the technique. (From the Foundation for Human Enrichment, an excerpt)

Trauma Somatic Treatment

Somatic Trauma Therapy is an integrated therapeutic approach that draws on the most pertinent theory and the best methods for comprehending and treating trauma and PTSD. Somatic Trauma Treatment, which has been developed since 1992, is an integrated system of psychotherapy and body-psychotherapy that is always changing as new ideas and methods in the field are discovered. The goal of somatic trauma therapy is to relegate trauma to the past by addressing all facets of the impact of trauma on mind, emotions, and bodily sensations. (MN Trauma Project 2015, <https://www.mntraumaproject.org/trauma-treatment-models>)

Activities to Release Stress and Tension (TRE)

The body may release underlying muscular patterns of stress, tension, and trauma with the use of an inventive set of exercises called (Tension, Stress & Trauma Release Exercise). By safely triggering a natural reflex mechanism of shaking or vibrating that relieves muscular tension and calms the nervous system, Dr. David Berceli, PhD, developed TRE. The body is urged to regain its balance when this muscle shaking/vibrating mechanism is engaged in a secure and controlled setting. – (Found on TRE Webpage)

Cognitive behavioural therapy for trauma (TF-CBT)

For kids and teenagers who are having serious emotional and behavioural issues as a result of traumatic life events, TF-CBT is a collaborative child and parent psychotherapy technique. It is a components-based therapeutic approach that combines humanistic, family, cognitive behavioural, and trauma-sensitive therapies.

In order to better manage and resolve painful thoughts, feelings, and behaviours associated to traumatic life events, as well as to improve safety, growth, parenting abilities, and family communication, children and parents both learn new skills. (MN Trauma Project 2015, <https://www.mntraumaproject.org/trauma-treatment-models>)

Psychodynamic psychotherapy with a focus on trauma

While being said to have its roots in Freud's psychoanalytic theory, which placed a strong emphasis on unconscious conflict and meaning, psychodynamic therapy has developed into a multifaceted field that examines numerous aspects of intrapersonal, developmental, and relational processes. The premise that conflicts are more toxic and less amenable to integration while they remain unconscious, however, runs across all of these. In the context of the crucial therapeutic relationship and the client's developmental history, trauma therapies employ a variety of modalities and make an effort to raise the client's awareness of the connections between defensive dynamics, wishes, and fears, which Frederickson referred to as the “triangle of conflict” in 1999. -Excerpt from Spermon, Darlington, and Gibney’s book *Psychodynamic psychotherapy for complex trauma: aims, focus, applications, and outcomes* (2020).

Objectives of the Research

The main goal of the study was the shortage of trauma counsellors and trauma therapy treatment for Nigerian victims of insecurity who survived kidnapping by herdsmen-kidnappers. The specific objectives were:

1. To find out the trauma treatment therapy models that are offered to survivors of herders kidnapping to help them cope and survive with their terrible traumatic experiences in northern Nigerian states.
2. To determine the available skilled trauma counsellors helping survivors who were victims of herdsmen kidnapping in northern and central Nigerian states cope with and recover from their traumatic experiences.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the trauma treatment therapy models that are offered to survivors of herders kidnapping to help them cope and survive with their terrible traumatic experiences in northern Nigerian states?
2. What are the available skilled trauma counsellors helping survivors who were victims of herdsmen kidnapping in northern and central Nigerian states cope with and recover from their traumatic experiences?

METHODOLOGY

A mixed research methodology which is an integration of qualitative and quantitative data was used in this study. The population consisted of 998 survivor victims of herdsmen killer-kidnappers who had survived being abducted by herdsmen from northern Nigerian states. Purposive random sampling was used to select 200 victims who were herdsmen kidnapped survivors from northern Nigerian states. A four-point Likert scale questionnaire titled “Shortage of Trauma Counsellors and Trauma Therapy Treatments for Nigerian Kidnapped Victims Questionnaire” and interview served as the study’s main data collection tools. The questionnaire contained 15-items while interview contained two items; and the instruments were validated by two lecturers in the Faculty of Education, Veritas University Abuja. A test retest reliability was done in order to ensure the reliability of the instrument. A reliability of 0.75 coefficient was gotten using Cronbach’s Alpha which was high enough to determine the instrument’s reliability. With the assistance of seventeen research assistants, the researcher administered the instrument. To prevent any kind of prejudice or loss on the part of the respondents, the questionnaire was collected immediately. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis and pie chart.

RESULTS

The two research questions earlier raised in the study were answered using thematic analysis and pie chart.

Research Question 1: What are the available trauma treatment therapy models provided to cushion the effect of trauma on kidnapped-survivor victims of herdsmen kidnapping to enable them cope and survive their traumatic experiences in northern and central Nigerian states?

The findings revealed that the trauma treatment therapy models provided to cushion the effect of trauma on kidnapped-survivor victims of herdsmen kidnapping to enable them cope and survive their traumatic experiences in northern and central Nigerian states have been coded into one theme as follows: Availability of Therapy Models Provides Support for Trauma Treatment.

Theme 1: Availability of Therapy Models Provides Support for Trauma Treatment

Man cannot change most of the physical universe, but he can accept reality, anticipate it, and live a better life by doing so. One of the therapy models that the participants raised with regards to availability of trauma treatment therapy, was that Cognitive Therapy (CT) for anxiety and depression prevention counselling intervention was unavailable.

In this regard, the participants maintained that therapy models have helped victims to cope with traumatic experiences. For example, one participant in the focus group discussion said:

“A lot of victims have been affected by the herdsmen kidnapping, which has led them to flee from their homes and sojourn in other places. In such situations, they lose everything, leaving their community, and now they come back to start from scratch to rebuild their houses. Events like this leave scars that is why it is important to have therapy models for trauma treatment”.

Based on the narrative, there is evidence that therapy models provide support for trauma treatment, which corroborates with Akuto’s (2017) research findings indicating that therapy model is a valuable component of aid to kidnapping victims, helping them to handle the effects of traumatic experiences they encountered.

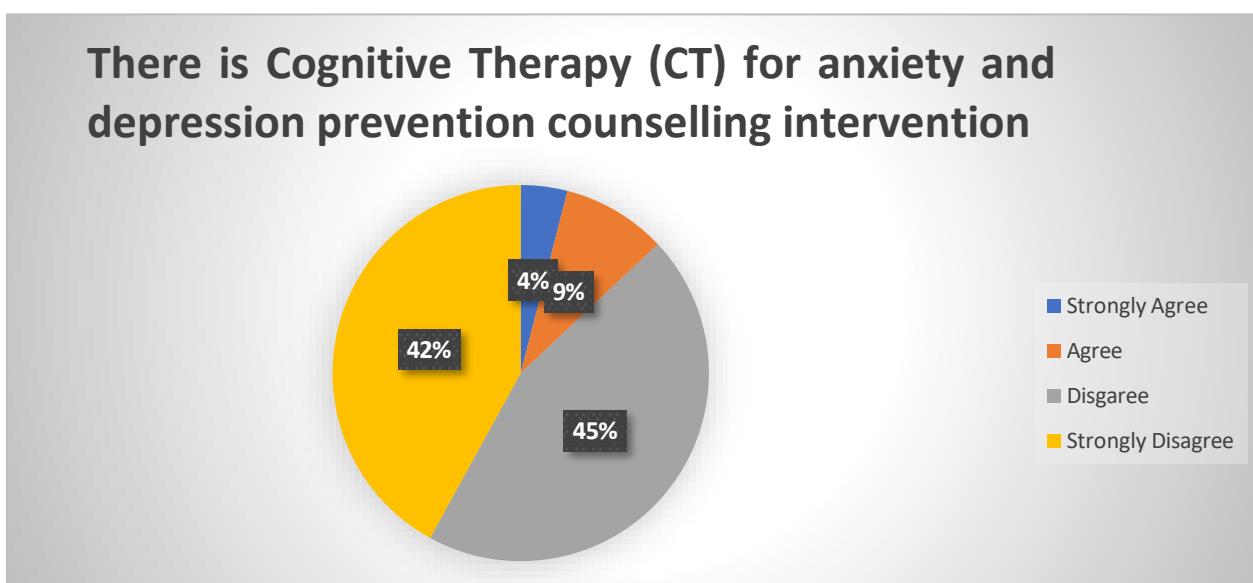


Figure 1

The pie chart above showed item 3 of the questionnaire which indicated that the majority of the victims agreed that Cognitive Therapy (CT) for anxiety and depression prevention counselling intervention was not available.

Research Question 2: What are the available trained trauma counsellors helping survivor victims of herdsmen kidnappers cope and survive their trauma experiences in northern and central Nigerian states?

The findings revealed that the trained trauma counsellors helping survivor victims of herdsmen kidnappers cope and survive their trauma experiences in northern and central Nigerian states have been coded into one theme as follows: Availability of Trauma Counsellors Helps Kidnapped-Survivor Victims Cope and Survive Trauma Experiences.

Theme 1: Availability of Trauma Counsellors Helps Kidnapped-Survivor Victims Cope and Survive Trauma Experiences

One of the participants raised a concern with regards to availability of trauma counsellors, was that trauma counsellors helping survivor victims of herdsmen kidnappers cope and survive their trauma experiences in northern and central Nigerian states was not available.

In this regard, the participants maintained that trauma counsellors have helped victims to cope and survive traumatic experiences. For example, one participant in the focus group discussion said:

“They need the service of counsellors who could help them cope and survive traumatic experiences”.

Based on the narrative, there is evidence that trauma counsellors help kidnapped-survivor victims to cope and survive trauma experiences. provide support for trauma treatment, which corroborates with Adikwu’s (2021) research findings indicating that trauma counsellors play an important role in helping trauma victims cope with traumatic experiences they encountered.

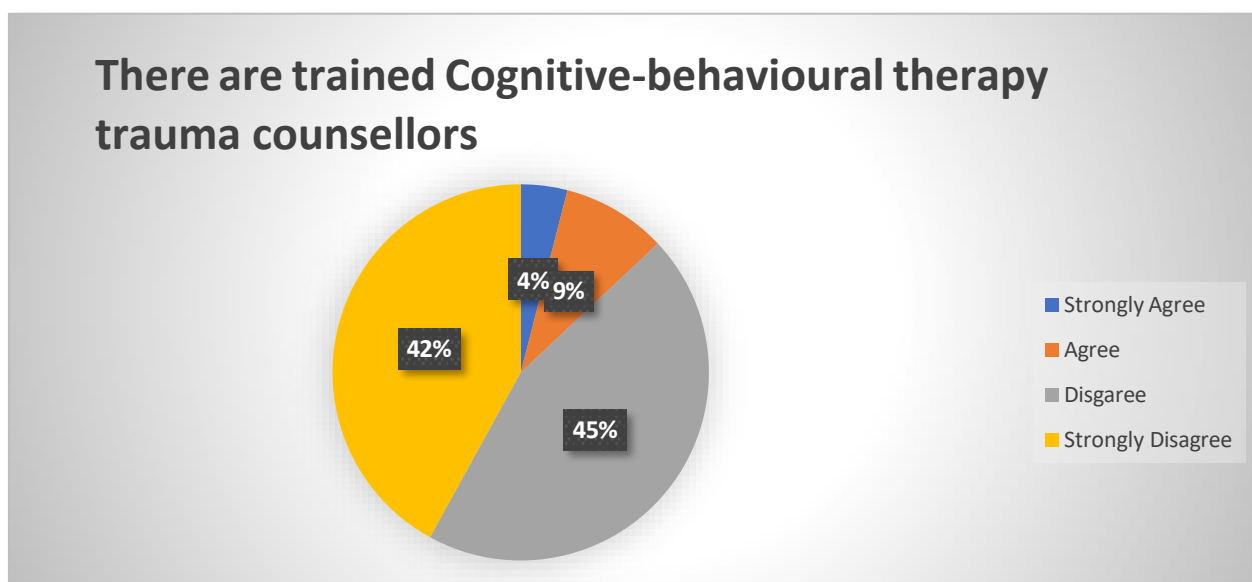


Figure 2

The pie chart above showed item 12 of the questionnaire which indicated that the majority of the victims agreed that there were no Cognitive-behavioural therapy trauma counsellors to help the kidnapped-survivor victims cope and survive their traumatic experiences.

CONCLUSION

Trauma is a painful emotional experience that may produce a lasting psychic effect and, sometimes, a neurosis. The insurgency and the insecurity being experienced by the citizens in Northern states of Nigeria by especially the survivor victims of Fulani herdsmen kidnappers, is very traumatizing. Its effect is far reaching, it is constituting to the general populations’ insecurity and psychological imbalance, as well culminating to their daily work derailment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Northern Nigerian government should provide trauma therapy models that would help victims cope with traumatic experiences.
2. Government and non-governmental organizations should employ trained trauma counsellors that would help the kidnapped-survivor victims cope and survive their traumatic experiences.
3. Provide government grants and scholarships to students enrolling in trauma-focused programs.
4. Partner with NGOs and international organizations to create fund and equip dedicated trauma centers in areas with high incidences of kidnappings to ensure accessible trauma counseling services for victims and their families
5. Government should mandate that all primary healthcare centers in affected regions employ at least one trained trauma counselor.
6. Government should introduce trauma-focused workshops and train existing healthcare providers in basic psychological first aid.
7. Institutions should utilize radio, Television and social media to educate the public on the importance of trauma therapy and available resources.

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