



## Stemming the Tide of Insecurity in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions: Guidance and Counselling Implications

Iyeke Patrick Okoh  
Institute of Education  
Delta State University, Abraka

### ABSTRACT

*The world is currently overwhelmed by series of changes, uncertainty and instability. In the wake of this ever-rapid change, counselling and guidance will bring peace to the troubled world. This paper x-rays the magnitude of insecurity situation in Nigeria at large and the educational system in particular. It is the belief of the author that most of the problems of insecurity in the larger Nigerian society have their roots within the nation's tertiary institutions. The Nigerian youths who are products of our higher educational institutions now serve as a cannon fodder of most of these security problems. Adopting the Behavior Modification and Responsibility theory as a model, the paper advances some psychological approaches which are preventive in nature to ameliorate the incidence of insecurity in our educational institutions and thence the larger society. Better investment on peace education for the youths is highly advocated. This strategy is designed to run through primary prevention, secondary prevention and tertiary prevention levels.*

### ARTICLE INFO

Article History  
Received: October, 2019  
Received in revised form: Dec., 2019  
Accepted: March, 2020  
Published online: May, 2020

### KEYWORDS

insecurity, tertiary education, Nigeria and guidance and counselling

### INTRODUCTION

Man operates in group settings as social beings. According to Santrock (2006) groups range from dyads which consists of two people to immense groups of people linked by national identity, religion, ethnicity or gender. Regardless of their size, group serve useful human purposes. They satisfy our personal needs, reward us, provide information, raise our self-esteem and give us an identity. Groups also satisfy members' need for companionship. Many of the groups of which we are members, our families, schools, religious groups, ethnic groups also provide identities. When asked who we are, we often answer in terms of which groups we belong to. Conflict between group especially ethnic groups are rampant around the world (Chirof and Seligman, 2001). Groups such as Al-Quida

attack countries such as the United States that they perceive to be enemies of Islam and the United States retaliates. Israelis and Palestinians fight over territories each claiming religious and historical rights to the disputed land. Clashes still break out between Catholic and Protestants in Northern Island and between Hindus and Muslims in India (Santock, 2006). In Nigeria, conflicts are rife. In the North of Nigeria, the militant Islamic sect, the "Boko Haram" consistently attack their Christian neighbours and functionaries of government without any identifiable issue of provocation. At the micro level, inter-ethnic clashes abound, such as between the Tivs of Benue state and their Jukun neighbours of Taraba state as well as the intractable inter-ethnic and inter-religious crisis in Plateau state of Nigeria. The net effect of these



conflicts is monumental loss of human and material resources, apprehension, disillusionment, mistrust, and general insecurity within and among nations.

Within the educational system, there is a growing concern among Nigerians about the escalating incidence of violent behaviours perpetuated in Nigerian universities. Violent behaviours can include a wide range of behaviours-explosive temper tantrums, physical aggression, fighting, threats or attempts to hurt others, use of weapons such as guns and bombs, fire setting as well as intentional destruction of properties and vandalism (AAP, 2011). Indeed violence could be cruel and sadistic. Their complex and troubling issue has engendered a total collapse of peace and security in our educational institutions thereby hindering meaningful academic pursuit. Studies have tried to identify the possible causes of violent behaviours among adolescents and youths and accordingly proffered solutions (Engs and Hanson (1994); Egbue, (2006), and Anderson (2000). This present paper, however, has proposed a psychological remedy to this intractable and ubiquitous problem of insecurity in our tertiary institutions.

#### **INSECURITY SITUATION IN OUR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

Higher education is the backbone of any society. It is the quality of higher education that decides the quality of human resources in a country. This is because, it is the source of feeder system in all works of life and therefore supplies the much-needed human resources in management, planning, design, teaching and research (Mishra, 2007). Among the core values of higher education are:

1. Contributing to national development
2. Fostering global competences among students

3. Inculcating value system in students
  4. Promoting the use of technology, and
  5. Quest for excellence (NAAC, 2004).
- Similarly, the National Policy on Education (2014) stipulated the goals of tertiary education as
- a. To contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training
  - b. To develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society
  - c. To develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
  - d. Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of society
  - e. Promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
  - f. Forge and cement national unity; and
  - g. Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Laudable as these pronouncements are, there seems to be a big gap between these ideals and realities on ground. One issue on which Nigerians are in agreement is that their nation is undergoing a period of unprecedented security challenges. Tertiary institutions are not spared of this problem. According to Amaele (2013), tertiary institutions have become breeding grounds for various forms of deviant behaviours. One of such phenomena is the ever growing threat of secret cult activities. It has become a way of life especially among young people. One effect of cult activity is that it breeds a culture of violence, fear and insecurity. They have resulted in rape, unwanted pregnancies, the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, lawlessness, a loss of peace



as well as mental or psychological illness. Omotoso, Ejene, Aina and Omotosho (2008) had expressed similar opinion by stating that criminal offences like rape, armed robbery and assassination are linked with cultism. According to them, these nefarious activities are more often than not perpetrated under the influence of drugs. Every cult member is a drug user as they need false courage provided by drugs to carry out their nefarious activities.

Omede (2011) blamed the upsurge in criminal activities in our tertiary institutions to inadequate facilities. This translate to overcrowding of campuses that often times culminate in cult activities and other social crimes such as prostitution and examination malpractices. Since the school community is a microcosm of the larger society, expectedly, therefore, this ugly behavior of youths are carried along with them to the larger society and many even after graduation fight in different cult groups, get recruited as political thugs as well as waylay travelers as armed robbers (Omede (2011). Thus, the Nigerian youths who are products of our higher institutions now serve as cannon fodders of most of these security problems. They engage in communal violence, political assassination, kidnapping and hostage taking as well as the notorious "Boko Haram" activities in the Northern part of Nigeria. The net effect of these criminal behaviours is the enthronement of near anarchy situation in the country. This in turn seems to be driving Nigeria towards disintegration. Economically, there is massive capital flight from Nigeria to neighbouring countries as well as reduction in foreign investments.

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This paper is anchored on the behavior modification and responsibility theory, espoused by Kolbe, Collins and Cortese (1997). According to them one of the recurring issues in the theory of

counselling is the role of personal character and responsibility in the decisions people make and the actions that result. Increasingly this issue arises in the areas of alcohol and drug abuse, road rage, violence and other contemporary phenomena. In advocating for improved behavioural health in schools, Kolbe and Cortese (1997) stated that "The most serious and expressive health and social problems that afflict countries today are caused in large part by behavioural patterns established during youth (e.g. tobacco use, high fat diets, drugs and alcohol abuse, violent and sexual risk behaviours)... Young people who suffer from physical illness or injury, mental health problems, hunger, pregnancy and drug use, or fear of violence are less likely to learn irrespective of effort to improve educational methods, standards or organizations" (p. 256).

In an attempt to support this theoretical perspective, NIR (2008), observes that whether an individual wishes to consider many of the causes of social dysfunction as issues of character, they are at some level, issues of personal responsibility for one's stability and for that of others. In such instances, counselling intersects with concepts of behavioural health and cross-cultural perspectives which suggest that wellness and unwellness, interpersonal conflict and violence are linked to one's feelings of self-esteem, depression, or other mind-body connections (Lickona, 1991: p. 9). Thus, as attempts to understand individual problems of living shift from the external environments that people occupy to their internal one such as their attitudes, values, impulse control and so on, there is a new and growing respect for individual personality, achievement, self-care and concern for others (Benett, 1993). This is where personal social counselling as a panacea to insecurity in higher education finds its relevance.



## **COUNSELLING APPROACH TO THE PROBLEMS OF INSECURITY IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS**

Tertiary education is the education given after secondary education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotronics including those institutions offering correspondence courses (FGN, 2014). Among others, the goals of tertiary education shall be to; develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of individual and society and forge and cement national unity. One means of actualizing these goals is through research and development. According to Onokerhoraye (2007), universities stand tall above other higher institutions since they are centres of excellence. Thus, they are expected to be isolated from the problems and practical aspects of normal problems through knowledge generation and advancement.

Onokerhoraye (2007), however, lamented that the ivory tower has witnessed lots of internal disharmony and chaos. Among these internal conflicts is that of student secret cults. The negative activities of these cults progressed from fighting one with another with their bare hands to the use of dangerous weapons. According to him, cult members maim other students by pouring acid on them and by carving cult symbols on the faces and back of their victims with sharp instruments.

With the ever increasing incidence of these cult activities, cult violence has become a very serious source of disruptive activities in our higher educational institutions. This situation has not only led to physiological damage to persons, it also creates an atmosphere of distrust and fear (Egbue, 2006). In the light of this, there is an urgent need for adequate institutional measures to contain this very serious problem. There is a compelling need to create a climate for the understanding of tolerance as a means of solving human conflicts in schools. Guidance and

counselling specialists can provide invaluable advice to educational administrators and school heads. Generally, they are able to explain programmes and policies which can reduce the level of insecurity in the different institutions. According to Naoeul (2008), such programmes would consider the whole context and support system available for youths and their families. Guidance and counselling services are needed to reduce and possibly eliminate anti-social activities on our campuses (Odeck, 1999 p. 9). It assists the individual to behave appropriately in relation to other members of the society (Reay and Lucky, 2001). If the tempo of dialogue is increased, there is hope crises and insecurity will drop.

Guidance and counselling was conceived by Odeunmi (1992) as encompassing the full range of personalized assistance given to the individual seeking to expand his self-understanding and his understanding of others. In support of this, Egbochukwu and Alika (2010) said that guidance and counselling is an essential tool for effective interpersonal relationship for self-understanding as well as equitable adjustment to one's environment. According to Okobiah and Okorodudu (2004), guidance and counselling is a programme of activities which has provided us with the gateway out of the existing numerous problems in our present age of complex scientific and technological development. Indeed, it is the third force in education. Guidance and counselling in higher education are needed to reduce and possibly eliminate anti-social activities on our campuses, thereby enhancing peace and security (Naouel, 2008).

Since the learner is constantly interacting with peers and significant others in tertiary institutions, some form of guidance and counselling is necessary to enable him make the best of such social interactions. Guidance on social clubs to



join, advice on use of free time, counselling on the use of drugs, such as cigarettes and alcohol and guidance on burning issues are some points of crucial attention. Consequently, social guidance and counseling is important in higher education as the level of peace attained determines the internal image of institutions. According to Mishra (2007), a university with poor record of students' unrest and drug abuse is probably one with a poor scheme in social guidance and counselling.

Intervention programmes to help adolescents and youths in school to live harmoniously among themselves and reduce conflicts can be divided into three parts: primary prevention, secondary prevention and tertiary prevention. (<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence>).

#### **Primary Preventions**

At the primary prevention level, the following activities are to be undertaken to help youths develop positive social relationships in order to enhance peace and security amongst people.

- a. **Life Skills Training (LST) Programme:** This is designed to help reduce or prevent the use of tobacco, drugs and alcohol. The programme teaches self-management skills, social skills and information related to drugs
- b. **Bullying Programmes:** This targets elementary and secondary school students. Group discussions are held with students or individual sessions with teens who are identified as being a bully or the victims of bullying.
- c. **School Transitional Environment Programme (STEP):** This programme targets junior and senior secondary students. It is designed to reduce stress that can occur from changing schools and redefining the roles of the teacher.
- d. **Peace Builders:** Here counselors and other trained professionals use various

methods such as role playing and modeling to teach students how to interact with each other in a positive way.

- e. **Working towards Peace:** This focuses on self-discipline, communication, problem-solving, responsibility and building healthy relationships as well as emphasis on anger management, conflict resolution and healthy alternatives.
- f. **Programmes for Parents and Adolescents:** Their focus is on encouraging positive social behaviour coupled with parent training.

#### **Secondary Prevention**

Activities geared towards development of positive human relationship and peaceful co-existence among individuals include:

- a. **Parent Training:** The programmes here guide adults on how to implement safe and healthy practices in the home.
- b. **Home Visitation:** This programme involves nurses, counsellors and other professionals to go to the adolescents' home and provide training, counselling and continued monitoring.
- c. **Juvenile Mentoring Organisations:** These programmes support one-to-one mentoring that are geared for youth at risk of failing or dropping out of school or involvement in delinquent acts, such as gangs.
- d. **Safe Kids Safe Streets:** This programme encourages the juvenile justice system to become more proactive in helping adolescents that have been abused or mistreated.
- e. **Striving Together to Achieve Rewarding Tomorrow:** It focuses on targeting teenagers at risk who live in severely impoverished neighborhoods.
- f. **Families and Schools Together (FAST Track):** This is a combination of several strategies such as social skills training,



home visitation, parent training, academic tutoring and behavioral skills for appropriate behaviour in school.

#### **Tertiary Prevention:**

- a. **Family Therapy:** The focus of family therapy is to reduce the dysfunctional component of the home such as communication and interaction.
- b. **Foster Care:** This is an alternative to incarceration, whereby adolescents with severe criminal behaviour are supervised on intensive bases by fostering family.
- c. **Intensive Protective Supervision Project:** This is a programme in the juvenile justice system that removes adolescents from institutions and provides them with intensive community supervision. (<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence>)

The above paradigm can conveniently be modified and adapted to suit our socio-cultural situation in order to prevent disruptive practices within our higher educational system and promote peace and security.

#### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Conflicts and insecurity affect everybody. Therefore, everyone should carve a role for himself or herself in dealing with the ugly situation. In view of this, the following recommendations have been put forward

1. The three levels of government should invest a large percentage of their security votes on conflict and violence prevention. This can be executed through well-organised peace education programme for youths and students.
2. The counselor-student ratio in Nigeria's tertiary institutions is abysmally poor. For closer monitoring and mentoring of students, more counselling

psychologists should be engaged on full basis in our tertiary institutions.

3. The general studies curriculum for higher institutions should be modified to incorporate social skills training and peace-building lectures. This should be made to run for at least three contact sessions.
4. Above all, government and non-governmental agencies should step up their campaigns against cultism which has been identified to be the chief sponsor of violence and insecurity in our tertiary institutions. Students caught engaging in cult activities should not just be rusticated from the school system but prosecuted and punished according to law.
5. Finally, youth organizations should be encouraged. Their activities should be monitored and tailored towards youth leadership training, offering opportunities for inculcation of pro-national ideologies, cooperation, dialogue, conflict prevention, amongst others.

#### **REFERENCES**

- Amaele, S. (2013). Menace of Cultism in Nigeria tertiary Institutions: Challenges and Way Forward. *International Journal of Educational Foundations and Management*, 1(1) 32-41. (Retrieved 8/6/13 from <http://www.ijefm.com>).
- American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) (2011). Understanding violent behaviour in children and adolescents in [http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts\\_for\\_families-violence](http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families-violence) (retrieved 8/23/2012).
- Anderson, J. (2000). "Lucifer on the loose" in *Meridian Magazine*, <http://meridianmagazine.com/ideas/990430looseLucifer.html>.





- Bennett, W. S. (Ed) (1993). *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Chirot, D, and Seligman, M. E. P. (2001) *Ethno political Warfare*. Washington, DC. American Psychological Association.
- Egbochukwu, E. O. & Alike, I. H. (2010) Remedy to the Inadequate Representation of guidance and Counselling in the National Policy on Education in Edo Journal of Counselling, 3,1(17-28).
- Egbue, W. G. (2006). Sociocultural factors in Nigerian Male Youth Violence: Relationship with Education and Employment. *Journal of Social Science*, 112(1). 1-10
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) *National Policy on Education*. Yaba-Lagos: NEDC Press.
- Kolbe, L. J. Collins, J & Cortese, P. (1997) Building the Capacity of schools to improve the Health of the Nation: A call for assistance from psychologists. *American Psychologist*, 15, 235-265.
- Lickona, T. (1991). *Educating For Character*, New York: Bantam, p. 5
- Mishra S. (2007). *Duality Assurance in Higher Education: An Introduction*. India: National Assessment Accommodation Council (NAAC).
- NAAC (2004) Guidelines for Re-Accreditation, Bangalore: NAAC.
- Naouel, M. A. (2008). Guidance and counselling to enhance lifelong learning in Algeria a PhD Thesis
- Odebunmi, A. (1992) *Understanding Guidance and Counseling*. Abiokuta, Gbemi-Sopipo Press Ltd.
- Odeck, A. (1999). "Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education" <http://www.nege.ir/reports/custsatisfactionresults.doc>. p.15.
- Okobiah, O. C. & Okorodudu, R. I. (2004). Concepts of guidance and counselling. In issues, concepts, theories and techniques of guidance and counselling. Benin City: Ethiope publishing Comp.
- Omede, J. (2012). Reformatting Nigeria Secondary Education to meet Unemployment and security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. *Research Journal in Organizational Psychology & Educational Studies* 1(4) 238-242.
- Omosho, J. A., Esene, M. O., Aina, J. S. & Omosho, F. A. (2008). The role of tertiary Education Stakeholders in stemming the tide of cultism on University Campus in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 13(1) 12-24.
- Onokerhoraye, A.E. (2007) *The Ivory Tower Has Tilted*, being a convocation lecture delivered on Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2007 at the Delta State University, Abraka.
- Reay, D & Lucey, H. (2001) Children, school choice and social differences. *Educational Studies*, 26(1). Pp. 83-100.
- Santrock, J. W. (2006). *Human Adjustment*. New York, McGraw Hill.
- Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General; <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/> (retrieved 8/23/2012).