

Counselling for National Stability and Integration in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined counselling for National Stability and Integration in Nigeria. The paper observed the implication of counselling for National Stability and integration to Nigerian youth. Some of the concepts discussed includes, Counselling, National Stability, Causes of National Instability in Nigeria, Challenges of Instability faced by Nigerian youth, Significance of Counselling for National Stability in Nigeria, National Integration, Impact of National Integration, Counselling Implications for National Stability and Integration. Counselling helps in providing the full potentials in the area of educational, social, emotional, economic, and vocational, developments as a tool for stability and integration. It is concluded that counsellors must rise up to the challenge of nation building to build peace and national integration in state of traumatized by violent conflicts and crises. Hence national integration plays a significant role in making and keeping the history of a nation alive with sustained development. It was suggested that there is need for Seminars and workshops should to be organized by counsellors in collaboration with the government, Non-Governmental Organizations and other stakeholders in order to discuss and tackle contemporary issues on National integration and stability.

Keywords: Counselling, National Stability, National Integration

Introduction

Counselling is a designed process whose practitioners assist clients to improve their well-being, alleviate distress, resolve crisis and increase their ability to be creative, innovative and make appropriate decisions (Okere, 2015). The main goal of counselling is to facilitate the development and adjustment of an individual who needs help in one form or the other. The practice of counselling as a helping service started as human existence is faced with many challenges (Abraham, 2016). The means of achieving these needs and aspiration appears very limited. Apart from the limitedness of the means of achieving life objectives, there are many variables which negatively stand against the way of achieving life desires. The inability of achieving our wants, coupled with the obstruction of certain variables creates numerous problems/challenges for human existence. Nigerian society to be precise is facing a lot of national instability challenges which are overt in different parts of the country (Olayinka, 2018).

Thus, the growth of any nation depends largely on the nation's ability to maintain national stability, integrity, peace and steady interpersonal relationship among its citizenry (Okere, 2015). The counsellor seeks to guide people towards self-understanding, acquisition of skills and knowledge about the environment and appropriate adjustment mechanism for optimum productive work, social and psychological satisfaction as well as economic growth and security development

(Robinson, 2017). A united country and people are in a better position to ably confront its crises of development, nationhood and stability (Sriyakul, 2019). Nigeria is a greatly divided country in which it is accompanied with serious suspicion, distrust, and antagonism among its diverse people (Akande & Okuwa, 2020). These problems have had grave consequences for the good health, orderly growth, development, stable democratic government, unity and survival of the nation (Olayinka, 2018). The different measures and approaches designed and employed by successive Nigerian governments to unite and preserve and generally keep the country afloat cannot be said to have been really effective as the polity is daily faced with increasingly monumental crisis of insecurity, sectarian violence, ethnic strife's, instability and threats of disintegration (Okere, 2015). National integration is the bond and togetherness between people regardless of their caste, creed, religion or gender (Zolberg, 2017). It is the feeling of oneness, brotherhood and social unity under communities and society in a country (Ojo, 2019). National integration helps to keep the country unified and strong from within despite the diversities. Adegoke & Esere (2019) defined national integration as the process of unifying a society which tends to make it harmonious in all things. So, national integration can be from the fact that the nation which remains integrated (Dimka, 2022). It will always progress on the track of development and prosperity. Stability is a phrase with high esteemed value which can affect the survival of modernization and development (Nwozor, 2017). It is how ever important to note that stability is an unavoidable necessity for Nigeria's development holistically, which requires counselling principles to solve the problem of instability in Nigeria (Shertzer, 2018).

Counselling

Counselling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals (Abraham, 2016). In addition, Robinson (2017) defines counselling as a helping relationship aimed at assisting individuals to convert behaviours to cope with life situations. It is a relationship of trust where by the counsellor who is capable of being regarded as a special kind of teacher assists an individual (counsee) to evaluate himself and his opportunities, make a feasible choice in the light to his unique characteristics and opportunities, accept responsibility for his choice/action and initiate a choice of action that is consonant with his choice. Counselling is an interaction between trained personnel (the counsellor) and a troubled individual (the counsee) for the purpose of helping the counsee to resolve his problem(s) or crises (Okere, 2015). In this sense, everybody needs counselling, but not everybody can counsel, since counselling requires specialized skills which could be acquired through training and practice (Adegoke & Esere, 2019).

Akande and Okuwa, (2020) posited that counselling has a number of procedures in assisting an individual to solve his problems. Olayinka (2018) defined counselling as a process in which one person helps another in a one-to-one and a face-to-face encounter. The counsellor serves as a coach focusing on the potentials of the client to help him understand himself. Okon (2013) emphasized the essence of counselling is to assist him understand himself, situation and environment, discover his interests, potentialities and opportunities in life and learn how best to effectively utilize his assets as well as minimize his weakness, to live a maximum productive life. Thus the significance of counselling for national stability and integration in Nigeria is seen as giving advice to citizens on miscellaneous issues (Zolberg, 2017).

National Stability

As regards the concept of national stability, Cole (2016) opines that the concept signifies feeling of well-being or contentment among the citizens of any country; a contentment driven by the level of the citizens' engagement with the system that governs them.

Stability, according to Cole (2016) national stability “must be built on a re-established relationship of trust between our politicians and the people they serve.” In this regard the concept of national stability is referring as a nation being firmly fixed; not likely to give way or over turn. Stability is essential for any nation embarking on the process of development.

National stability was an issue that every government must implement to be effective via policy, rule, or law (Gwanmo & Amanago, 2012). Local organization was between people and government which served public goods and was subsidized from central government. National stability focused on reducing inequality, equality, and reducing conflict among political interest groups (Sriyakul, 2019). Public officers also were reformed in terms of implementation response to the policy such as national stability reform to evaluate their performance (Dudley, 2017). In addition, the government sector must reform the roles, duties, structures and work processes of government agencies to be transparent, honest, efficient and effective. Consequently, changing attitudes, i.e., open mind is needed to accept changes that are developed (Adeniyi, 2018).

Causes of National Instability in Nigeria

Dudley (2017) highlighted some causes that lead to instability in Nigeria as follows:

- a. The conflict in the Niger delta region has effects because of the use of oil revenues, therefore locals dealers face serious environmental degradation; rebels are frequently kidnapping foreign oil workers.
- b. In the Nigeria's diversity, three main ethnic groups make up 66% of the population and they do not work together, also there is a strong religious divide between Christians and Muslims.
- c. Crime and corruption, not only in government but generally which have adverse effect on investors.
- d. Regional issues, Nigeria forms part of the “triangle of instability”, sharing borders with countries like Cameroon, it has continuous spillover of refugees and guerilla fighters over its borders.
- e. Political instability: based on occurrence of strikes, demonstrations and violence.
- f. The issue of internal terrorism such as Boko haram, bandits and herdsmen.
- g. Ethnic violence that is herdsmen
- h. Marginalizations of some sections in the country for the provision of basic infrastructure, and these have significantly compounded Nigeria's security issues.
- i. Economic growth and development of any nation is not attainable without peace and guarantee integration.

Some Challenges of Instability faced by Nigerian Youth

Inconsistent Societal Values

The changing face of world politics and culture has left the Nigerian youth in a state of confusion as to what is “it” or the real “thing” is. Every one of them wants to get rich all too soon because someone they know a classmate perhaps, has a rich father or a well-to-do uncle, who have

helped them to pull it through (Arisi, 2017). This is not pouring as person on a quest for honest gain, after all older citizen still work to make an income till old age. No one wants to be left in penury in old age, at retirement, when one's income is drastically reduced. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, only fortunate people ever have financial ease at retirement since the system does not ensure regular payment of retirement benefits. Money is indispensable, as a meaningful life is almost impossible without money (Sriyakul, 2019). Our values have changed to such an extent that people are only willing to help when they hope to get gratified on the long run, hence the expression nothing goes for nothing. The sense of right has disappeared in a world of relativity. Being a brother's keeper has given way to an almost incurable, murderous and deadly competition that often puts a rift in homes, corporate bodies and the family at large (Coleman, 2018).

Economic Problems

Economic challenge is one of the pedantic and redundant in my opinions about economic disintegration, making a quick remark will not be outplace that the youth who goes through the stress of school in and who graduates with no future is under undue stress (Emeka, 2021). The motivation for enduring the hardship and exigencies of education especially in Nigeria where the facilities are slim is undermined since there is no more future in it. What the youth wants is a just remuneration for his effort. Therefore the present high rate of unemployment is an underlying factor in national stability and the integration of the youth (Gboyega, 2019).

Political Differences

Political differences are the norm in all democratic societies; in fact it is a process that enables fairness and everybody's participation in governance. However, our political system is devoid of political philosophies and ideologies that incorporate a viable system which takes in to cognizance the cultural diversities of the Nigerian people (Gwanmo & Amanago, 2012). Seeing ourselves as people with a common goal should be a better approach to solving our national problems. Hence, individuals should be counseled about eschewing sectionalism and about their political attitude. History tells us that when individuals are overwhelmed by their sense of superiority, which is a complex, it spells doom for them and the society. Many Nigerian youths are often engaged as political thugs for pittance, even if it were for a fortune, it should never be encouraged as untold number of people are killed (Uzonwanne, 2015). Why would anyone approve the elimination of people for momentary gain, vaulting ambition and power? It is a fallacy to feel that after a person is dead and gone /he should continue to perpetuate a philosophy, an ideology or a lifestyle that has not brought any good to one's neighbour (Otite, 2018).

Mass Illiteracy

Education for all is a very good place to start in helping people know their rights and how to read documents that are of enormous importance to their existence. An individual who has not learnt to read the dosage or indications of a particular drug is bound to be poisoned or killed by drug abuse and self-medication (Nwozor, 2017). Gaining mastery in any field is a mediating variable in self-esteem and self-confidence and subsequent motivator for achievement in other fields. This might also be linked with learning properly and correctly.

Literacy becomes indispensable in national stability because not being able to communicate with people of other ethnic groups and languages is a primary cause of instability in Nigeria (Suberu, 2014). The National Youth Service Scheme was setup with one of the objectives being to foster national stability and integration.

Underdevelopment

Without doubt the main grouse with government by a people of any nation is usually underdevelopment. In developing countries, a great hue and cry is made against governments in appropriate spending, when priorities are discarded and public coffers are depleted for the benefit of a few empowered people (Otite, 2018). African leaders and particularly Nigerian leaders make these countries their predilection as they seize every opportunity to get rich in order to give themselves the exclusive life style that they observe and partake abroad, while resigning their compatriots to untold hardships from underdevelopment, lack of electricity, dangerous roads, inadequate medical facilities, lack of shelter and potable water to mention a few (Oladeji & Folorunso, 2017). There can never be national stability and integration, where there is underdevelopment and individuals feel they do not matter in a country, where only a segment hang on to national resources and claim it is for their families, associates and region.

Foreign Intrusion and Distraction

No one can stop the spread of universalism and attend an issue of cultural colonization, which has become the order of the day as our youths run after foreign tastes in clothing, food, education, music and film (Nwadiakor, 2019). Perhaps the tide would have been stemmed if we had given value to our indigenous initiatives. So much has been achieved; however, the ever-increasing brain drain is of much concern. The verdict is that we permit the intrusion and the distraction because we have not built and developed our own local structure to allow for long lasting and dependable output to benefit the young Nigerians (Zolberg, 2017).

The Significance of Counselling for National Stability in Nigeria

Counselling education is highly significant for political class and the integration of appropriate elements of counselling in to the nation's political system (Okere, 2015). This could be achieved by enacting law for political aspirants to be exposed to minimum standards of political and counselling education at the tertiary level with the support of the two recognized professional bodies in Nigeria: Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) and Association of Professional Counsellors in Nigeria (APROCON).

The Information service is very essential at this time for stability. An individual that is not informed will be deformed. The heartbeat of counselling is provision of adequate and genuine information. This is to update the individual's knowledge for adequate improvement. Creativity and innovation develop from ideas and information (Gwanmo & Amanago, 2012). Helping individual who may be engulfed with psychological depression, counselling centres if established at strategic locations in legislative houses and ministries at both state and federal level where they can meet professional counsellors for assistance (Shertzer, 2018).

National integration, otherwise termed nation-building, national unity, national cohesion, national loyalty, or the national question "involves consensus on the limits of the political

community and on the nature of the political regime” (Liddle, 2017). This simply means the forging of agreement among the members of a state on the extent of unity they wish to have as well as the type of political structure and institutions they desire. It is also a “process of unifying a society which tends to make it a harmonious city, based on an order its members regard as equitably harmonious” (Duverger, 2016). This implies that integration promotes unity which encourages smooth interaction among the members of the given society based on certain established principles of fairness (Ojo, 2019).

Zolberg (2017) define national integration as “a relationship of community among people within the same political entity or as a state of mind or disposition to be cohesive, to act together, to be committed to mutual programmes”. They are thus referring to a society of oneness whose members are willing to live and work together harmoniously and share the same destiny. It has also been viewed as: a process by which members of a social system develop linkages so that the boundaries of the system persists (sic) overtime and the boundaries of sub-systems become less consequential in affecting behaviour (Ajayi, 2016). The term national integration is now widely used to cover a wide range of political phenomena. National integration is used to refer to specific problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality which eliminates subordinate parochial loyalties (Dimka, 2022). In this sense, it is generally presumed that there exists an ethnically plural society in which each group is characterized by its own language or other self-conscious cultural qualities (Jega, 2021). Thus, integration is used to refer to the tensions and discontinuities on the horizontal plane in the process of creating a homogeneous progressive reduction of cultural and regional territorial political community (Bamisaie, 2019).

Olugbemi (2020) defined national integration as the collective orientation of members of a society towards the nation and its society in such a way that micro-loyalties are not allowed to jeopardize the continued existence of the nation and its objectives, goals and ideals. National integration is feeling of oneness which is not imposed by any authority. Feelings and actions in this regard come from within. The purpose of national integration is to build a united and strong nation. National integration is the awareness of a common identity among the citizens of a country. It means that though we belong to different races, religions and speak different languages, we recognize the fact that we are all one. It means unifying all the forces in the country so as to give the idea of one nation (Ajayi, 2016).

Some of the Impact of National Integration

i. **National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Scheme:** Meant to instill sense of patriotism, arouse national consciousness, wipe-off ethnic loyalty and religious bigotry is no longer a laudable and relevant scheme geared towards national integration. Gwanmo and Amanago (2012) observed that the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme, one of the government’s initiatives for national and cultural understanding is being threatened by frequent ethno-religious crises. Parents and guidance alike now take keen interest and joy in their wards serving within the confines of their ethnic origin. They are trying to avoid a situation where their children will be slaughtered in a cold blood at the expense of national integration and loyalty.

ii. **States Creation:** The logic of continued state creation in Nigeria purportedly to bring government closer to the people and achieve national development is a failed strategy. The continuous balkanization of Nigeria in to smaller, weaker and unviable units will multiply the

existing problems of ethnic minority, issue of lack of development, endemic corruption and adversely affect the overall integration and unity of the country. Adeniyi (2018) affirmed that state creation in Nigeria remains entirely an elite's affair. It is an enterprise controlled, prosecuted and employed by the elite for the satisfaction of their desire for power and political relevance. Since 1963, states creation has not been a basis for resolving the national questions and the attendant problem of mass alienation from the political and economic processes of Nigeria (Emeka, 2021).

iii. **Federal Character Principle:** The intent and purpose of Federal Character Principle in Nigeria is a laudable one. However, the application and operation of the principle tends to differentiate rather than integrating and unifying Nigeria. Olugbemi (2020) and Suberu (2014) were of the opinion that the Federal Character Principle as defined and pursued by the 1979 and 1999 constitution cannot succeed in integrating and uniting the people because it is an ideology of the minority ruling class aimed at protecting their interests. Gboyega (2019) confirmed that it is merely an elite ploy, which will not materially improve the lot of the downtrodden in whose name it is raised.

iv. **National Symbols and Nigerian Constitution:** The National symbols especially the National Anthem and Pledge whose recitations are made compulsory in schools, at private and public occasions have no meaning beyond the confines of the political elite who enjoy the goodies of the government (Abdullahi, 2019). The recitation is equally not impactful on nationalistic feelings and consciousness of the students. In the same token, the constitution as a body of laws uniting the country is nothing but a document in which those who are expected to form part of those who are to make it are excluded (Shertzer, 2018). The exclusion of the cross sections of the population from the making of the constitution coupled with high level of illiteracy are great minus for using constitution as a unifying mechanism in Nigeria (Robinson, 2017).

Counselling Implications for National Stability and Integration among Youth in Nigeria

Counsellors are encouraged to educate the general populace on the significance of empathy where counsellors used to solve the emotional state of clients. Counsellors in the correctional centres should train the wrong doers if convicted to put themselves in the victim's shoes, thereby feeling the pains of evilness, they have committed; this will show the former to reframe from his/her dastardly intention (Okere, 2015). In setting the ball rolling, counsellors should ensure that the type of environment that will promote democratic citizenship, social responsibility, peace, social justice and reconciliation is designed (Robinson, 2017).

Through counselling, the need for good governance, cooperation and dialogue, poverty eradication, job creation, fighting corruption, discouraging nepotism, etc. should be stressed by counsellors (Shertzer, 2018). They should initiate the formation of clubs and societies in schools where those embers imbibe qualities that help them to be actively involved in social justice and peace issues in their communities, learn to adopt a non-violent stance towards conflict resolution and become endowed with them to cope with the anger, frustration and isolation staring at them from the environment.

Counsellors should also initiate training on conflict resolution and mediation techniques, especially for community leaders who will then pass this on to their members. Okon (2013) asserted that government should promote the training of public administrators towards peace

dialogue and democratic interactions as one of the essential components for handling insecurity arising from their community.

The guidance counsellors are conscious and conversant with the problems of Nigeria, which requires counselling principles, skills and techniques to help in solving the problem of stability in Nigeria (Abraham, 2016). To bring about stability requires allow conducive democratic environment to prevail and sustain with principles of counseling, which should recognize each person as an individual to be treated with equal justice, equity and fair play.

Counsellors should carryout programmes to develop high moral conduct and the practical fear of God in the society using counseling; advice for moderate life style and the virtue of contentment; and advice to cultivate the sense of hard work and discipline (Corey, 2018). The counsellor with knowledge of behavior modification techniques, attempt to eliminate blocks instability like greed, materialism, oppression by modifying our attitudes and value system in our pattern of behaviour. Since attitudes are learned, they can be unlearned towards acceptable direction (Adegoke & Esesre, 2019).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper emphasizes counselling in providing the full potentials in the area of developments as a tool for stability and integration. Through counselling would build the universal values and behaviours on which a culture of national is predicated, including the development of non-violent conflict resolution skills and a commitment to working together to realize a shared and preferred future of a nation. Counsellors must rise up to the challenge of nation building to build peace and national integration in state of traumatized by violent conflicts and crises.

National integration is very significant for a country because it is seen many times in the history of mankind that the integrity of a nation fell in danger. It had confronted major challenges from within and also became a victim of foreign assaults. Hence national integration plays a significant role in making and keeping the history of a nation alive with sustained development.

Suggestions

1. Government should provide counsellors with proper training on how to reduce the instability in the country.
2. Federal, state and local government leaders should provide skills acquisition centres for youths that will integrate them.
3. Traditional rulers should intensify efforts in identifying some challenges of instability faced by Nigerian youth.
4. Government institutions should train more counsellors on how to handle issues related to National stability and Integration.
5. The federal government should give a legal backing to counselling profession as to encourage active participation in the National integration.
6. School counsellors should enlighten the students on the need for unity and integration among Nigerians.

7. Seminars and workshops should be organized by counsellors in collaboration with the government, Non-Governmental Organizations and other stakeholders in order to tackle contemporary issues related to National integration and instability.

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