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## THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF TERRORISM AND RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE ON THE NIGERIAN YOUTH AND SOME COPING STRATEGIES

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### Abstract

The fact that Nigeria is multi-religious in dynamism is a source of grace. It should not breed division but rather a kind of unity in diversity. Religions are different ways through which creatures search for God who is the Creator and final cause. Unfortunately, the different approaches in seeking God have metamorphosized into different forms of violence. The most disturbing are the countless Boko haram and killer herdsmen attacks in which hundreds of people are often killed. The survivors of these attacks live to suffer the traumatic effects of the harms incurred. This violence which ranges from physical, spiritual, emotional and psychological has significant influence on the brains of the youth of the country.

The psychological impact on the youth can include, fear, powerlessness, guilt and shame, anger, grief, posttraumatic stress and painful flashbacks which are retrieved from their affective memory. The effects can also extend to the development of eating disorders, depression and anxiety disorder which can eventually lead to isolation and subsequently to some suicidal ideations.

This article reviews the psychological effects of religious violence on the youth who later become the future of the country. It acknowledges the great damage it does in the overall

functioning of the Nigerian youth. It outlines the practical implications of such violence and suggests some coping strategies. It proposes a model of peaceful co-existence and universal fraternity. It establishes the fact that psychological health through psychotherapy is a crucial step in re-establishing the inner peace and serenity of the wounded youth both in principle and in fact.

**Keywords:** violence, emotional wounds, trauma, post-traumatic stress, affective memory, psychotherapy

### **An Overview of Terrorism in Nigeria**

With the world as a global village and with the advancement in information technology, terrorism appears mainly as the headlines in the broadcast of most countries. Nigeria is one of those countries. Despite the fact that Nigeria is a country blessed with many mineral resources; with little or no history of natural disasters (earthquakes, tsunami, hurricanes), the citizens suffer a great deal from man-made disasters (terrorism and religious violence) deliberately imposed on them by some narcissistic and psychopathic individuals and groups. There seems to be an intentional hidden agenda to destroy, inflict injury, crush and extinct a particular group of people or a particular religion in Nigeria. This unconscious and conscious ambition often easily breeds violence of varying degrees.

Terrorism can be understood as “the systematic use of terror, often violence, especially as a means of coercion to effect

political change.”<sup>1</sup> According to Soyinka (2012), terrorism refers to only those violent acts which are intended to create fear and terror and could be perpetrated for a religious goal, political or ideological objective. Hoffman (2006) in his definition emphasized the aspect of deliberately targeting or disregarding the safety of innocent people and non-combatants. With these definitions, the Boko Haram and killer herdsmen in Nigeria can be categorized as terrorists. Since the inception of Boko Haram in the late 2000s, many people have lost their lives. Churches and Mosques have been destroyed. Children have helplessly and fearfully watched their parents and siblings killed. The trauma that goes with the sight of blood spill is terrible for a child to recall and contain. The Boko haram group targets and invades market places, churches and mosques with larger populations and detonates bombs to get maximum causality.

While the Boko Haram group operates mainly in the Northern part of Nigeria, the Fulani herdsmen operate in the southern part of the country. Often, the marauding herdsmen have unleashed mayhem on families. At such instances, children witness the rape of their mothers, sisters, aunts and the slaughtering of their family members *en masse* when the community resists the pastoralists (herdsmen) from invading their farms with their cattle for grazing. This often leads to the destruction of the cash crops and

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<sup>1</sup> Anyaeze, Regis C. 2020. *Terrorist Framework and Inclination: The Behavioural Pattern of Boko Haram in Nigeria*, in International Relations and Diplomacy. Vol. 8, No. 04, 127-141, David Publishing.

the farmlands belonging to the community for attempting to put up resistance for their defense.

During these unpleasant experiences, many children and adolescents are emotionally abused, neglected or smothered in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the individuals, caregivers, family members and the society do not seem to recognize the long and short-term psychological effects that this gruesome act has on the mind/psyche of the growing child and adolescents. Sometimes, they suffer from myriad of difficulties and problems all through their lives, as the traumatic effects are not discovered and processed immediately. In life, people have various levels of assimilating and processing experiences or information. In this case, while those who are naturally resilient easily integrate these painful experiences as part of their life history and move on with life, individuals with weaker structures do not do so easily. They internalize these negative experiences and romanticize them almost like a way of life. This affects their general behaviour and world view.-Some will perceive the world and others as hostile, see themselves as worthless and powerless,-and as a result, they self-alienate and withdraw from participating in social activities around them. Some, as well, will externalize the abuse thereby becoming violent and aggressive themselves. They unconsciously replicate what they experienced, leading to a spiral of violence in various ways; domestic or communal. This tends to be the ugly trend as witnessed in the spate of evil and violence in Nigeria today. And since this is not adequately given the attention it deserves, and has almost become a vicious circle that is difficult to break. This is because the emotional self is wounded

and craves for either healing or revenge. One who does not get healing desires revenge at all cost.

### **Terrorism and Religious Violence in Connection with Different Forms of Abuse in Nigeria**

The frequent and habitual operations by terrorists have made the word 'abuse' a household word among Nigerians. Abuse is any form of intimidation or violation imposed on a person or a group of people by another who holds power or any higher position. In general, terrorism breeds different forms of abuse especially, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Physical abuse simply implies any deliberate act which causes harm or injury or trauma to another person. Physical abuse can be described as any physical injury inflicted upon another person with cruel and/or malicious intent. It can assume direct or indirect contact. Physical abuse is the intentional use of physical force against a child that results in – or has a high likelihood of resulting in – harm for the child's health, survival, development or dignity. It includes all non-accident physical injuries caused by a child's caretaker (e.g. parent). It also includes all actions or inactions, which result in actual or potential harm, that are within the control of or preventable by the parent, care-giver, or authorized person (such as school teacher)<sup>2</sup>. In Nigeria today, many families are displaced due to terrorism and lose their properties in pains. Some also sustain some physical injuries as a result of that. This leads to emotional abuse and subsequent psychological and physical pain. Emotional abuse leads to emotional changes and mood swings so that either a person expresses his or her emotions in an

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<sup>2</sup> *World Health Organization, 1999.*

exaggerated manner, or that he or she becomes emotionally blocked to do so. It could therefore lead to behavioural or conduct disorder and attention deficit disorder<sup>3</sup>. The sense of domination and intimidation which the perpetrators of terrorism and religious violence confront people with, make the victims feel very bad and emotionally hurt. Freedom is one of the basic and fundamental needs of the human person. It is a natural gift and once a person is deprived of it, frustration sets in. Emotional abuse aims towards controlling, subjugating, punishing and demeaning another person. It is the most painful form of violence and the most detrimental to self-esteem. Emotional abuse cuts to the very core of a person, creating scars that may be longer lasting than physical ones.

According to CAPTA<sup>4</sup>, sexual abuse includes using persuasion, enticements and other inducements to coerce a child to engage in sexually explicit conduct or simulation of sexual acts. It entails involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, and therefore is not in the position to give his or her consent. The child is not developmentally mature and ready for this. Sexual abuse of minors therefore violates societal norms and laws and is a taboo and a crime. Children can be sexually abused by both adults and other children who are – by virtue of their age or stage of development – in position of responsibility, trust or power over them. Due to developmental

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<sup>3</sup> Attention deficit disorder has to do with some impairment of the neurons which may cause as the case may be, some behavioural difficulties, especially in the areas of concentration, attending and responding to instructions, completing duties etc.

<sup>4</sup> *Child Abuse Protection and Treatment Act*, 1996.

experience, language and knowledge gap, the girl or the boy can never give an “informed consent”.

Sexual abuse is the exercise of a particularly violent and destructive form of dominative power. Such abuse can only happen where there is a power difference between the victim and the perpetrator. Sexual abuse undermines the four central pillars on which people base their sense of security and belonging in the world. These pillars are:

**Autonomy:** This is the sense that we have some control over our lives. Each person enjoys this natural gift and when it is violated, the person feels intimidated. It means the desire and the need to be free and to shake off all forms of restraint; and to avoid or quit activities prescribed by domineering authorities<sup>5</sup>. Individuals enjoy their privacy and cherish it. By abusing a person sexually, one's sense of autonomy is not recognized, it is rather destroyed.

**Order:** This is the belief that the world is a structured/predicable place where events can be understood and explained. Each individual organizes himself/herself in a certain way and is happy when events that concern him or her follows a structured manner and is interpretable and understandable by the individual. When the reverse is the case, it leads the individual to confusion and frustration. Sexual abuse does not follow any logical order.

**Relatedness:** This implies both the internal and external freedom for having positive relationships with people, and knowing who we can trust and where we fit into the networks of reciprocity that

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<sup>5</sup> Rulla, Luigi M. 2004. *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*. Rome: Gregorian Press, p. 465.

unites us. Genuine and responsible relationship entails reciprocity in love and respect. Sexual abuse involves mainly an instant sexual gratification of one person at the expense of another.

**Meaning:** This the ability to make sense of what is going on around us, to value and appreciate what is positive and to detest what is objectively wrong. A person who is sexually abused cannot make sense of the whole episode; this renders the person sad and angry.

### **The Traumatic Effects of Terrorism and the Need for Connection**

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines trauma as “an emotional response to a terrible event like accident, rape, or natural disaster”<sup>6</sup>. Trauma is categorized into two major groups: type I and type II trauma. While the type I trauma is mainly associated with post-traumatic stress, the type II is mainly associated with more complex clinical manifestation which are more difficult to treat. These may include primitive defense mechanisms, some attributes of paranoia disorder, addiction, and other forms of self-mutilation. In this article, I refer mainly to type I trauma which refers to mainly to unexpected traumatic experience or event that renders a child or young person temporarily helpless and breaks down the person’s natural and simple coping defences. Trauma stirs up negative emotions and triggers lasting fear in the brain of children. Depending on how it is handled, it may lead to feelings of rage and unremitting

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<sup>6</sup> Jayne, Leonard. 2020. *What is Trauma? What to Know*. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/trauma>

sadness. It is worthy of note that the individual's characteristics, personality and other socio-cultural factors can influence a child's response to the experience of trauma.

Life is a continuum from childhood – adolescence – adult – old age. There is continuity in these stages of human development and growth. Some experiences at some phases of life may disorganise a person while some experiences may help in re-integrating and gaining greater resiliency in a person. Terrorism has a cumulative harm on the early brain development of a child and affects their mental and emotional health. Direct witnessing of terrorism is a great risk factor for developing post traumatic stress disorder. This is because children are more vulnerable with weaker ego structure and ego strength. Trauma interferes and sometimes disrupts a child's developmental process. When this is the case, the child adopts many mechanisms to cope. Growing into adolescence, the child adopts some unhealthy behavioural patterns which culminate into adolescence and adulthood if it is not arrested. For example, a traumatized child is angry at the moment of the traumatic experience and also helpless as well. As such, the child represses his or her anger while waiting for the best opportunity to hit back. Many Nigerian youth act the way they do as a result of unexpressed anger incurred during an experience of terrorism. They absorb and assume some false beliefs and self-defeating attitudes from their past negative experiences. They come to believe in the survival of the fittest, and as a result, they believe that there is nothing wrong in dominating and intimidating others insofar as it will lead one to some momentary happiness. Equally and sadly, too, they lose the sense of empathy and altruism and put on the garment of

selfishness. This is the origin of recycling adults who do not care at all for the feelings of others, (psychopaths). It is difficult to unlearn what one has internalized as a pattern of life over a period of time. This is because a child's brain is pliable and absorbing, so that pronounced painful and harmful experiences at the early stage of life are stored in the brain of the child's proverbial memory which, consciously or unconsciously, are replicated in life for they have formed part of their nature. This leads to frequent and recurring flashbacks and remembrance of the particular events, because experiences form part of the affective memory of the child.

Consequently, similar experiences easily trigger the child and remind him or her of the original experiences, for emotions leave residues in the life of the recipients. It is the repeating visual and imaginative memories of the painful experiences that compound the problem for the child and later develop into post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The child anxiously attempts to find answers to his or her many 'whys' of the problem but cannot. Therefore, they feel disorganised and disturbed, and they can dissipate their energy in trying to make sense of the terrorism.

Worthy of note is the fact that the traumatized person will always be driven to being alone; prefers to withdraw and isolate himself or herself from a group or from other friends. Behaviourally speaking, "trauma isolates". Therefore, parents or caregivers are to be observant of this behaviour because it is not helpful to the child. It gives the child the unhealthy opportunity of ruminating and nurturing the injury and hurts already sustained. The child or adolescent should not be left alone. The caregivers are to give support, give the child conducive and safe atmosphere to talk

about those things and help them to process this experience very well to help them to reconnect trustingly to his or her being and to others in a relational form.

Apart from psychotherapy which is a major treatment of post-traumatic stress and other forms of psychological effects of terrorism, group inter-dependency and connectivity is an eloquent way of returning a primary victim<sup>7</sup> of terrorism to homeostasis. This is because while trauma isolates and instils the feelings of shame and embarrassment to the victim, a group recreates and provides a sense of belonging and uplifts and gives support to the victim of trauma. In other words, the group helps to restore a stolen dignity and helps the person to regain his or her sense of worth.

### **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Major Psychological Effect of Terrorism**

There are many psychological effects of terrorism on the youth. Some of them include post-traumatic stress disorder, depressive disorders, emotional flattening, suicidal ideation, sleep disorders, anxieties and social phobia, dissociation and character disorders. But this article will concentrate mainly on post-traumatic disorder as a major psychological effect of terrorism.

Most children undergo a prolonged psychological stress after the traumatic event of terrorism or religious violence. Some fortunate

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<sup>7</sup> Primary victim entails one who has a direct experience of terrorism; who, by implication, sustains either physical or emotional wounds. A secondary victim is either a friend, or family member or anybody who has an emotional attachment to the primary victim.

ones will have a short duration of the consequences while some, unfortunately, will have a long duration of it. However, the symptoms are clinically significant when trauma re-occurs and re-occurs. It can be persistent and therefore may lead to post-traumatic stress disorder. The prevalence of (PTSD) in Nigeria among children and adolescence is supposedly high. This is because the acts of violence and terrorism have become habitual in some parts of the country, especially in the northern part of Nigeria and the seeming efforts of the government to stop these still remains insignificant<sup>8</sup>. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is characterized by a set of symptoms such as re-experiencing symptoms, distressing recollections, persistent avoidance and hyper arousal in response to exposure to one or more traumatic events<sup>9</sup>. There are some developmental factors that influence the manifestations of the symptoms. Children and some adolescents may not be able to note these manifestations; it is the responsible and responsive adult with them who can observe the symptoms of PTSD on them. Sometimes, it is observed in recurrent horrible and fearful nightmares, or hyperactivity/hyperarousal of a child while playing with other children and other behavioral manifestations, which are ordinarily above the child's chronological and intellectual age. These are unconscious attempts to re-enact the already experienced traumatic situation.

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<sup>8</sup> (<https://theconversation.com/why-terrorism-continues-in-nigeria-and-how-to-turn-the-tide-143479>) "Why Terrorism continues in Nigeria and How to Turn the Tide". Retrieved 8. August 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Sadock, Benjamin James, 2007. *Synopsis of Psychiatry. Behavioral Sciences/Clinical Psychiatry*.

Tenth Edition. Wolters Kluwer, NY, p. 1274.

The many episodes of terrorism and religious violence in Nigeria have rendered many people victims of post-traumatic disorder (PTSD). This disorder is easily developed in those individuals who were primary witnesses to terrorisms or who have experienced threats to life with high intensity of fear and anxiety. In this case, the degree of impairment and distress is high and unmanageable by the individual. Some of the behavioural patterns of the victim of post-traumatic stress include: disruptions of affect regulation, rapid shift in emotional states, aggressive behaviours, and some psychosomatic sicknesses.

Unfortunately, most Nigerians will not seek the appropriate required help (medical and psychological help). They often resort to only spiritual and traditional solutions in addressing the disorder.

### **Approaches to Traumatic Events: Fight-Flight and Freeze Response**

Many underlying factors determine how a child reacts to a traumatic event. More important is the individual's natural characteristic and the support system. When a child is faced with a traumatic event, the first reaction is to escape from the particular place of the event. Sometimes if the emotional and physiological disposition of the person is strong, the person may decide to confront the situation and remove all obstacles. This may come in the form of aggressive behaviour and related attitudes. Again, the brain may momentarily be frozen, such that the person will be dissociated from his or her feelings and the present moment. In this case, there is a kind of paralysis in the person towards what has happened. The person may be fixed, confused, in a state of fantasy and not knowing what to do. This experience may be

short lived or may be prolonged. It is good to know that whatever attitude a child puts up in moments of trauma (whether the child confronts the situation, takes flight from it or freezes), the child still suffers the effects. This is because “the effects of trauma in early developmental stages negatively impact upon the maturation of the child’s stress coping systems and significantly increase vulnerability to a range of behavioural and emotional disturbances.”<sup>10</sup> Trauma leaves residues in the emotional life of the child and therefore becomes difficult to deal with once and for all. Sometimes similar factors may re-awaken and re-evoke the same emotions which the person experienced at the initial time of trauma.

### **Some Coping Strategies for the Nigerian Youth**

Normally, there is a penchant in a typical, average Nigerian person to label every negative phenomenon or sickness that has no immediate medical solution as ‘spiritual attack’. Most often, enemies are suspected as the sources of attacks in the belief that one’s enemies cannot wish one good but evil. Sometimes, people believe that the demons are also the culprits of their mishap in life in which case, people seek help from ‘an anointed man of God’ who is invited to perform spiritual deliverance on the person however willy-nilly even at the expense of any scientific evaluations. Aside spiritual help from the anointed men or women of God, some people also patronize the cultural and traditional services or trado-medical concoctions in an effort to stabilize situations. Similarly, the uniformed attitudes of most relatives of victims of trauma do not help the victims in

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<sup>10</sup> Miller, Robyn. 2018. *Trauma: Effects and Responses* Unpublished Document, CCP, Rome, p.4.

processing their situations. Sometimes, when symptoms of PTSD and other related psychological problems start manifesting in the individual sufferers, some people around them tend to insinuate that they have either spiritual problems, like possession by marine spirit, evil spirit or that they are lunatic. In some places, they are suspected of belonging to one secret cult or the other in search of better life, affluence or protection. Sometimes, it is believed that they are suffering from their failure to keep to the terms of their agreements upon initiation into the sect. Sadly, these efforts and their reliance only repress and often aggravate traumatic experiences in the individual victims sooner or later. Gradually, they assimilate these negative energies and their vibes from people around them and begin to hallucinate for no just cause. This renders them more vulnerable and eventually, they tend to believe that their situation is irremediable.

While the services of these spiritual, cultural and traditional help can be good in themselves and of course with regulations, they are to serve as accompanying tools for the one who suffers from PTSD. Scientifically or professionally speaking, they are not enough in themselves and do not stand to the tests and demands of the times. Arguably, everything is not spiritual or is every solution to problems meant to be culturally sought for without any touch or reliance on scientific evidences for lasting and integral solution. Psychological help is the best approach for healing PTSD. This must have a preliminary medical attention as well.

### **Psychotherapeutic Interventions**

Psychotherapy is highly recommended for one who is exposed to terrorism or religious violence. Terrorism traumatizes many people who experience it and when it is not well attended to, it may lead to PTSD which becomes more complex. The goals of psychotherapy are to relieve patient's emotional distress, assist them in finding solution to problems in their lives, and help them modify personality characteristics and behaviour patterns that are preventing them from realizing their potential for productive work and rewarding interpersonal relationships. Psychotherapy is geared towards helping people to learn some constructive ways of dealing with their challenges and difficulties in life. Sometimes it is mainly supportive as in the case of aiding people to handle their different traumatic experiences. When it comes to PTSD, the most effective psychotherapies are:

- Psychodynamic psychotherapy
- Cognitive behavioural therapy
- Group therapy

**Psychodynamic psychotherapy:** This is also referred to as Insight therapy. It takes its origin from the psychoanalysis of Freud. The main focus is to uncover the unconscious processes in the human psyche so that the person may be in touch with his or her feelings and thoughts. In fact, the emphasis is to increase the person's self-awareness in order to understand better the influence of one's past experiences on the present behaviour. Psychodynamic psychotherapy offers the opportunity to explore the psychological problems and to trace their roots and causes. It begins with specific problems such as management of anger, or affective dependency. Therapy helps one to change habitual ways

of thinking and behaving by helping one to learn more about how one's mind works. Psychodynamic psychotherapy provides one with the knowledge of one's unconscious motivations and inconsistencies. One is inconsistent when the person is motivated by some unconscious needs that are not in harmony with the person's values. One is consistent when one is motivated in one's action, whether at a conscious or unconscious level, by needs that agree with values. Therapy brings this dynamism to the person's awareness so that one detects if he or she is motivated by real gospel values or motivated by needs to gratify one's ego, or by apparent goods. When there is this awareness, a person matures.

**Cognitive behavioural therapy:** The idea here is to get to the person's emotions through his or her thoughts, therefore the person's thought process, automatic thoughts and false assumptions are examined. In this, one's erroneous beliefs and inappropriate reactions are explored. For example, one who is traumatized is helped to reason that his or her lack of sleep is not as a result of evil spirit but as a result of his high unconscious fear and anxiety given the past painful experiences. Automatic thoughts overestimate and exaggerate threats and instil fear and confusion in the person. It therefore discourages one from handling the situation in a meaningful manner. It is assumed that these thoughts lead to feelings. By being mindful of one's thoughts, one can control one's feelings and consequently one's actions. It is mainly for anxiety, depression and phobias which many people with PTSD suffer from. It challenges the idea of a direct connection between situations or experiences and feelings and posits that it is actually the thoughts we have about those situations that result in the feelings we have. The focus is on

behavioural change. It entails a kind of educational agenda whereby the therapist has a scheme of work as the restructuring of one's present behavior. In other words, the emphasis is on the actual self, the present behavior and not on the unconscious influence. In this case, the patient will be helped to re-examine and reflect on some distorted beliefs which produce some external manifestations of negative behaviours.

**Group therapy:** People who think their case is worse, when they see others recovering and changing their attitudes believe such can also be true of them. Observing the progress of others is enough motivation and source of hope. Group therapy exposes the universality and generality of problems. As the group progresses, the person gradually discovers that he or she is not alone. Members perceive their similarities and differences with others. It also gives people the opportunity of learning the dynamics of one another. Group therapy is altruistic in nature and through it members learn about themselves through the feedback from others. Other coping mechanisms are deep breath technique, mindfulness, creativity, gaining social support and individual personal help. Group therapy is a form of therapy in which about a small number of clients receive treatment from one or two therapists at a given time. Here the members should not exceed eight persons in a group so as to permit collaboration in the group. The group is both the container and the experience. It is not simply the sum of the members of the group; it is both curative and corrective therapy<sup>11</sup>. Group therapy can be psychodynamic

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<sup>11</sup>Urso, Antonino. 2016. *Appartenenza ed Identità. Atti del Convegno*. Roma, Italia: Editoriale Anicia s.r.l., p.62.

oriented, in which the context and the process serve as mechanisms for change as it explores interpersonal relationship within the group. It can also be from the perspective of cognitive behavior therapy.

**The importance of education:** Educative-formative process is an imperative for the Nigerian youth. This gears towards rendering them capable of owning up one's emotions, pains, and hurtful experiences as well as learning to express them appropriately. Education gives them the opportunity of learning and respecting the value of the other. Through education, the traumatic person learns that he or she can overcome the problem and that the problem does not define his or her identity. Good education provides one with the resiliency required to carry on in life. It helps the person to develop some sense of critical thinking and rational judgment which helps in making a person balanced. In other words, the traumatized person does not seek to retaliate or project the painful experience to others, but integrate what has happened as part of the person's history, though a painful history. This leads to discovering the objective truth of our existence. In this, one is conscious of the golden rule – *do to no one what you would not like done to you*. Again, education of the youths will facilitate forgiveness and reconciliation. It is the duty of church ministers (Christian and Muslims) to enforce the values of peaceful co-existence among all by emphasizing the fact that we many common values.

### **Conclusion**

Terrorism and religious violence have greatly contributed mainly to disorientation and character deformation of the Nigerian youth.

As these anti-peace and harmony groups (terrorists) are increasing, the number of the youth who are traumatized and hence disintegrated and disgruntled as a result of this increase. These are supposed to be the future leaders of the country. How can a disintegrated and disgruntled person rule a nation, be honest in his or her dealings with others? Yet, the nation/government has very few structures for rehabilitating people of this sort, and makes little effort to curb the spread of terrorism in the country. Instead, captured terrorists are treated with kid gloves and sentiments. The populace is made to believe that they have been de-radicalized and as a result, they are grafted into the Nigeria Police Force, the Military and other security outfits. Some of these 'de-radicalized' terrorists, proleptically and officially, continue with their nefarious activities in uniform, inflicting more harm and traumatizing experiences to the Nigerian youth who are reeling from their past hurts. This destroys hope, worsens situation and is counterproductive as most youth relapse into trauma.

Terrorism and religious violence have both short and long-term implications on children and adolescence. Exposing and experiencing these crises more often are detrimental to the mental hygiene and physical health of the individual. And most of the times, they culminate into post traumatic disorder. There is the need for parents, caregivers, social supporters and in fact the society at large to intervene early to prevent major health problems, substance abuse, learning problems and the engagement in violence and other forms of unacceptable behaviors. There is a need to create good functional structures for healing/rehabilitations of the wounded and disenchanted youths.

Similarly, traumatized youths should be encouraged by the society to consult with clinical psychologists for evaluations. Depending on the outcome of the evaluations, they can be placed on appropriate psychotherapy to help them recover fully. And importantly, there is a serious need to strengthen the security apparatus of Nigeria. This is extremely necessary to curb terrorism. For as long as terrorism continues unabated in Nigeria, the society will continue to witness the rise of post-traumatic stress disorder. Terrorism is not a culture to live with and so, it should not be normalized in the society if the society truly cares for the mental or integral health of her youth who are the future leaders of the nation. Inasmuch as we advocate for supportive systems for handling post-traumatic disorders, the best supportive system would be to instill strict security measures and to ensure that terrorists are brought to book and treated according to the rule of law in that regard. This, apparently, is one of the best ways of handling post-traumatic stress disorder in a place like Nigeria.