

# COUNSELLING SERVICES FOR PEACE AND UNITY AWARENESS AMONG YOUTHS IN NIGER STATE

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role of counselling services for peace and unity awareness among youths in Minna metropolis of Niger State. Descriptive survey research was employed to collect information from sample and conclude base on the targeted population. The population was all youth in Minna metropolis, four ward were randomly selected at twenty youths per ward, eighty youths were used for the sample. The instrument used were tagged Questionnaire for counselling services for peace and unity awareness among youth (QCSPUAY). It was meant to measure causes of crisis, disunity, place of youth on peace and unity in our communities and the role of counsellors in creating awareness among youth in Minna metropolis. Finding of the study showed that there is a severe disunity amongst the youth and that youth play a great role in influencing peace and unity their various communities. Hence, for the sake of peace and unity, there is urgent need for counselling services in all forms of education to expose youth to see tremendous advantages of peace and unity. Therefore, the study recommended that youth of different tribe, religion, political affiliation and social economic statue should always pursue peace and unity wherever they found themselves. Also, the services of counsellors should focus on creating awareness that will assist in influence youth towards embracing peace and unity.

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## Introduction

Peace and unity may be an establishment for national security and improvement. To accommodate communities in an emergency, it includes potential advancement of belief, equity, compromise and pardoning (Hariri, 2019). Currently, Nigeria is struggling with several security issues that have undermined our peace and unity as a country. These issues include insurgencies, kidnapping, communal clashes, cultism and banditry and are birthed by a high rate of unemployment, poverty, high illiteracy, ethnic split up, marginalization and socio-economic differences among others (Iyeke, 2020). In dealing with mentioned burning issues,

the nation right from ward to national level needs promote the need for proper education and make provision for it, to serve as an engine to inculcate the beauty of peace and unity among the youth (Douglas and Michael, 2017). According to Linda et al., (2020) education is a process of aiding knowledge, skills, values and belief under the regulation of educators, education influence the thinking, feelings and behaviour of people mostly youth. If most youths are properly exposed to every form of education, it will help to shape much of their lives afterwards (Bonnie et al., 2015). Marc and Teresa (2014) viewed education as limited to the classroom but also includes learning that takes outside the school systems and life exposure as well as interaction.

Since most of youth life occurs outside of formal schooling, encouraging peace and unity among youth, therefore, will involve reaching out to them in all places in the communities including markets, churches, mosques. Education is a commodity with both public and private value (Ibuebue and Grace, 2019). It can hence be adopted as a means to boost peace and unity for the country stability. Youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence. In West Africa, youth is often referred to as a group of persons (men and women) of the ages 15-30 or even 35 years that leave compulsory education and find their first job (Taiwo, 2014). Apostolides, (2017) defines youth as a period in which adult identities are shaped and through this society's institutions and cultural beliefs are either reproduced or remade. So youth and their attitudes and actions attract and create anxiety for the larger society.

The National Youth Policy defines youth as Nigerian citizens between the ages of 18 – 35 years. Between 1991 and 2006, the population of Nigerians below the age of 35 years comprises 60 per cent of the entire population of the country. In absolute terms, there are more young people in Nigeria today than any other segment of the population, and this comes with its peculiar social and economic consequences, hence called for the creation of the Federal Ministry of Youth Development in January 2007. Youth in Nigeria forms the active citizens of the nation who are feasible in promoting largely wanted peace and unity (Edosa, 2014). According to National Baseline Youth Survey (2012) across the country, over 5 million youths indicated were involved in conflict resolution at one level of governance or the other, but the response of the youths shows that 64.9% of them are involved in conflict prevention at the community level while 30.9% are involved at the ward level. Only 1.6% are involved at the State level. Hence, through adequate counselling, they can be involved to nurture the unity and stability of this nation.

Counselling is a form of talk therapy process where an individual, couple, family or group of people meet with a trained professional counsellor to talk about issues and problems that they are facing in their lives (World Health Organization, 2013). Counsellors have their roles among others to include helping individuals to manage depression, anxiety, harmful emotions and behaviours, or difficulties with coping with distressing experiences and issues using several therapies and theories. They also facilitate groups discussion of communal issues that need urgent attention as well as collaboration with other professionals (Centre for Substance Abuse Treatment. Substance Abuse Treatment for Persons, Child Abuse and Neglect Issues, 2000). Other duties performed by counsellors include negotiations in resolution and management of communal clashes, rehabilitation of victims of crises, restoration of the victims with their families, facilitates the involvement of youth in the restoration of peace and unity in the affected communities. These positioned a counsellor as a person to assist in exposing the youth to the needs and importance of peace and unity for the growth and development of the

community and state in general. Meanwhile, the practice of fairness among people and be a good person is not by birth rather a continuous process that is realised and learn as one progress in a lifetime. When youth with its large population is not well connected to the issues of the society, then the development and progress of the society not going to be realistic (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Health and Medicine Division, 2019). Generally, provisions of all forms of education having a counsellor as a facilitator to preach and encourage peace and unity among youth for the betterment of our states and nation at large is achievable. The collaboration of counsellors in the communities and all other stakeholders in religion, business, politics and traditions assist in engaging youth to bring about peace and unity in our communities.

According to the 2006 census, youth made up more than half of the Nigerian population with a growth rate of about 3% annually. This implies that to make significant progress in terms of promoting peace and unity as well as curbing the present security challenges faced by the nation, the youth as a viable active citizen of the nation is expected to be in lead. But this is not the case in Nigeria setting as the same youth who are expected to be the pillars for peace and unity are now being used for selfish and political gains. Yet, every means especially through counselling services must be harnessed to involve them in peace and unity course. This is because counselling is about providing individuals or groups of people with an opportunity to discuss any issues they are struggling with for lasting solutions.

This study aimed at assessing the role of counselling services for peace and unity awareness among youths in Minna metropolis of Niger State. The study is meant to achieve the following objectives: to find out: 1) The cause of crisis and disunity in Minna metropolis, Niger state, 2) The place of youth in peace and unity, 3) The role of counsellors in educating the youth for peace and unity and 4) The role of government in assisting the youth through counselling services for peace and unity of Nigeria

The following research questions guide this study: 1) What are the reasons for the lack of peace and unity in Niger State? 2) How can youths be engaged in Peace and Unity? 3) What are the roles of counsellors in the training of the youth for peace and unity? 4) The place of stakeholders in encouraging peace and unity of the youth through counselling services.

## **Method**

A descriptive survey as a research design was used in this study. It was employed to collect information from a typical sample and conclude regarding the view of the concerned population (Lau, 2017). This study is a survey of counselling services for peace and unity awareness among youths in the Minna metropolis of Niger State. The population for this study was all youth in the Minna metropolis of Niger State. Minna metropolis is made up of two local government areas (Bosso and Chanchaga) having a total of twenty-one wards combined. Five wards were randomly selected, from which, thirty youths were selected from each selected ward such that both major religions were evenly represented.

The research instrument used in this study was the tagged Questionnaire for the Counselling Services for Peace and Unity Awareness among Youths (QCSPUAY) and it consists of 33 items relevant to the research questions. The response required is Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The questionnaire was administered to youth from the five selected wards by the researcher and the filled questionnaire were collected back the same day administration

## Findings and Discussion

### Findings

**Table 1: Causes of Disunity in the Society**

No	Causes of crisis and disunity	Response			
		Freq	%	Freq	%
1	Peace and unity are possible among the youth	94	62.7	56	37.3
2	The communities do not need peace and unity	28	18.7	122	81.3
3	The youth are divided along with religious line	132	88	18	12
4	The youth are divided along with political affiliation	135	90	15	10
5	The youth are divided along with the ethnic group	141	94	9	6
6	The nation is too big to have peace and maintain unity	62	41.3	88	58.7
7	Our lack of peace and disunity is of positive values	19	12.7	131	87.3
8	Our lack of peace and disunity is of negative values	134	89.3	16	10.7
9	Youth do not need one another in this nation	25	16.7	125	83.3
10	Trying to encourage peace and unity among youth lead to more crisis	23	15.3	127	84.7
11	The preaching of peace and unity is a political delusion	74	49.3	76	50.7
12	Peace and unity will enhance stability and development in our nation	119	79.3	31	20.7
13	Our tradition is against peace and unity	19	12.7	131	87.3

Table 1 shows that there is stern disunity amongst the youth across the wards in the Minna metropolis even though a few claimed existence of unity, yet disunity is an issue of serious concern amongst the youth. This implies that in the Minna metropolis youth are certainly not in peace with one another. Thus, there is an urgent need for a nationwide campaign on peace and unity.

**Table 2: Youth can be involved in peace and unity of a community**

No	Place of youth in peace and unity	Response			
		Freq	%	Freq	%
1	What is more important is employment creation for youth, not peace and unity	122	81.3	28	18.7
2	The issue of unemployment should attend to before peace and unity	128	85.3	22	14.7
3	Youth are too busy to be thinking of peace and unity	128	85.3	22	14.7
4	Peace and unity is for old people	118	78.7	32	21.3
5	Youth are a tool for violence	132	88	18	12
6	Youth will benefit more when there is peace and unity	112	74.7	38	25.3
7	Peace and unity amongst youth is a necessity for growth and development	85	56.7	65	43.3
8	Involvement of youth in peace and unity course of a community make them looks like fools	132	88	18	12
9	Religion is a serious source of our disunity	38	25.3	122	74.7

10	As a youth, I have enough information about peace and unity	135	90	15	10
11	I have been educated about peace and unity in our community	77	51.3	73	48.7
12	I was taught peace and unity in the school	78	52	75	48
13	I do not understand what peace and unity means	57	38	93	112
14	I want to know more peace and unity	122	81.3	28	68.7

Table 2 reveals that youths have a very significant role to play in ensuring peace and unity in our communities, even though many of them appear not to know the benefits of peace and unity. Thus, it implies that youth in the Minna metropolis requires adequate education and counselling on the issue of national peace and unity.

**Table 3: Roles of counsellors in the education of youth for peace and unity**

No	The role of counsellors in educating youths on peace and unity	Response			
		Freq	%	Freq	%
1	There is a need for counselling in my ward	130	86.7	20	13.3
2	Counsellors should create awareness on the importance of peace and unity	115	76.7	35	23.3
3	Counsellors should work with community leaders to educate youth	125	83.3	25	16.7
4	Counsellors should assist to identify the potential of youth in terms of peace and unity	132	88	28	12.0
5	Counsellors should assist in the evaluation of issues confronting youth	115	76.7	35	23.3
6	Counsellors should be involved in rehabilitating youths of crisis victims	115	76.7	35	23.3

Table 3 shows that there is a high need for counselling services by youth in all forms of education for peace and unity. It implies that youth in the Minna metropolis are in dire need of counselling services to educate them on issues of peace and unity.

### *Discussion*

The need for youth involvement in peace and unity courses is not given the desire attention in the Minna metropolis of Niger State. The lack of adequate education of youth has gone a long way to negatively influence their way of life such that they partake in various kinds of vices that impend not only their peace but that of community in general. So, it is of great benefit for all stakeholders to put their heads together to design plans to deal with issues that stand to jeopardize our peaceful co-existence as a nation (Edosa, 2014). Reconciliation of

communities in crisis involves hope, fairness, reunion and tolerance among others to achieve these, there is a need for the creation of awareness and coordination on the benefits of peace and unity, counsellors as well trained personnel are needed in this regard.

There are several types of information needed by an individual to influence his or her decision. For the fact that via counselling services individual required information can be received and understood, therefore counsellors are expected to have an enormous influence on youth towards ensuring peace and unity. Based on the task before counsellors, their services are beyond formal education. This is because the presence of youth in the communities is not restricted to school alone. After all, not all youth engaged in formal education (Linda et al., 2020). Also, this study shows that, upon the present level of disunity and insecurity faced by the nation, if counselling services are adequately harnessed alongside with involvement of youths via all the available forms of education, peace and unity of the nation can still be achieved (Oguzie, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

Peace and unity are very important elements in holding the nation as one. The youths are very significant in the progress of Nigeria. Counsellors are trained personnel whose services in terms of influencing youth are highly needed in society. The synergy between youth and counsellors to bring about peace and unity in our societies is an effort that should be of concern to every stakeholder in Nigeria since this results in the formation of a united society full of developments. With the research on the counselling services for peace and unity awareness among youths in Minna metropolis of Niger State, the following recommendations are made: 1) Counsellors should work in creating awareness amongst youth to enhance peace and unity. 2) The government should engage the services of counsellors in the area of peace and conflict resolution. 3) Youth from different tribes, religions, political affiliations and social-economic statuses should do their best to work for peace and unity. 4) The government and other stakeholders should work with youth through the counsellor to educate them on the importance of peace and unity.

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