

STUDENTS' UNREST AND USE OF THERAPEUTIC COUNSELLING STRATEGIES FOR RESOLVING STUDENTS' CRISIS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES**BY****Dr. I.G. Usman,****Dept of Education and Counselling Psychology, Faculty
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Niger State.****Abstract**

This paper discussed definitions and meanings of crisis. It also dwelt on critical areas of crisis in the Nigerian Universities and causes of these crisis. The paper identified among other things, various meanings of value, value clarification, value orientation and value re-orientation. It also explained therapeutic strategies for remediating student crisis in Nigerian universities. Conclusion was drawn and recommendations were proffered accordingly.

Introduction

University education is the type of and level of education that is given to persons who are qualified for admission and enrolment, for courses, after receiving secondary school education and have fulfilled admission requirement or criteria. It is the apex or a critical of learning. It is sometimes referred to as IVORY TOWER and described as exclusive to a selected few. University education is the level of education, which leads to the discovery, and improvement of human potentials and talents. It promotes the production and utilization of best brains in Nigeria (Okezou, 2002; Mbekan, 2004).

According to Adamu (2010), university education plays a crucial role in technology transfer and development at two levels: (a) capacity to develop the production and management skills (b) it is the site that can combine the basic research needed for the advance of such industries with the training of researchers.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004:22) emphasizes that university education shall make optimum contribution to national development. The policy, according to Mgbeken (2004:6) stated that it will do this through:

Intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high- level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation, because development requires manpower for nation building by making professional course-contents to reflect our national requirements. This means that only courses relevant to our economy should be mounted.

Making all students as targets of all-round improvement in university education, by offering general-study courses such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge and nationalism.

The management of students' crisis in universities is a task of managing adolescents, with their multifarious and complex problems. Adolescents have the characteristic features of ambivalence i.e. to be good or to be bad. They are unpredictable and this explains why they are difficult to manage, except, with the application of professional skills and strategies, tacts and behavioural knowledge. Poor managerial approach in universities leads to students' unrest. Students' crisis or unrest in itself is a negative

tendency characterised by destruction and retrogression. According to Mgbeken (2004), one of the topical issues engaging the attention of educational managers (vice chancellors) in Nigeria today is that of management of students' crisis. It is a real challenge to the country's university Administration. Signals for crisis are exhibited, when students exhibit recalcitrant behaviour or raise objection against university authorities, their action ends up in student crisis. Mgbeken (above) added that, in order to stir a crisis, students engage in writing protest letters to university authorities complaining about their high handedness. They also post or display embarrassing posters and hand bills requesting meetings with university administrators, boycott of lectures, preventing other students from attending lectures, blocking highways, engaging in violent riots, that lead to death. It should be note that the anger of students hinge on the fact that enrolment of students is expanding, year in year out, but that facilities were in adequate, this coupled with other socio problems affecting students bring about student unrest.

Ojo (1995) maintained that students get involved in local, national and international issues which sometimes lead to students' unrest, to show their discontentment, "apparently due to the general awareness created by the school environment and also as a means of winning a voice in policy matters affecting them and others". There is also that factor of 'parenting', which helps to explain student behaviour. In the past, life was simple. The average family had time to look after their youth. There were few working mothers, and the children were meaningfully engaged, working closely with the parents on their farms, petty trade, business etc. There was close monitoring of family relationships. It was very difficult under the traditional system for children to be allowed to move in the circle of depraved children in the neighbourhood nor were they allowed to associate with strangers whose character the parents had not previously monitored. Therefore, there was close supervision of children and strict up bringing (parenting) until adulthood. Infact, good character was the cornerstone for contracting marriages.

With the advent of modernization and globalization, things are changing. Today, it is not only elites but even peasant farmers now have children who are bred and educated outside the home. Mothers now work to

make two ends meet so as to contribute their quota to the resources of the family. Many affluent families now hire nannies or foster parents, maids or house boys whose character and upbringing they cannot vouch for, rendering family ties to gradually breakdown in the face of pollution or adulteration, which all affects students' behaviour. Ojo (1995) mentioned that divorce is becoming fashionable and cases of unmarried mothers are increasing and that some marriages are struck at beer parlours or night clubs, contrary to the traditional value system. Student from such uncultured homes easily influence others to cause crisis in universities.

Through counselling approaches, and by projecting the positive attitudes of majority of students who do not engage in vicious radicalism and vandalism, more students might be encouraged to give their best to curb the excesses of some of their colleagues who form the hard core of student militancy on the campuses. In the words of Ojo (1995), "such a step might help to curb student unrest rather than the application of a sledge hammer to crack a small nut".

For instance, under the auspices of the United States, four Nigerians were in 1990s, sent to America to see how American University Students' Counselling services managed student crises in the universities. One of them, Ojo, in Ojo (1995) wrote:

... We met university administrators who gained a lot of experience in handling students' crisis-student unrest, discipline and counselling (P.xvi)

Crisis in Nigerian Universities

Crisis refers to a time of great difficulty, particularly when problems must be solved or important decisions must be made (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary 2002:278). The philosophy of education which is the nucleus as well as the central nervous system on which our educational system in Nigeria depends has implications for the practice of education in Nigeria today. In consequence, the lecturer/teacher should educate the learners in a way to make them want to find out more about themselves and the world around them, to inculcate in our learners, the values of honesty, discipline, humility, respect for others, and other values that we cherish and which make us live happy with one another. The present day Nigeria is witnessing educational institutions without adequate physical structures and instructional materials. Sporting activities are nothing to write-home about, libraries do not have adequate books. Population of students are increasing at geometrical proportion. The number of Nigerian universities has increased from one in 1948 to fifty in 2003 (Mgbekem, 2004). Currently, we have one hundred and seventeen (117) universities in Nigeria. When students are increasing without corresponding adequate facilities, it could lead to student unrest. Yetunde panel, who submitted its situation report in Lagos to the then minister of education, Professor Nwabueze, on 23rd August, 1993, wrote that campus was water-logged, tumble-down buildings, with leaking roofs, fragile, rickety doors and cracked floors and walls now close to collapsing, of congested ill-ventilated, poorly illuminated, stinking offices and reading rooms with dilapidated furniture; of broken down vehicles and gene-sets left to rot away from lack of repairs; of a working environment totally uncondusive to productive work; of

staff floating around with no offices; of lack or inadequacy of office equipment. (photocopiers, duplicating machines, type writers, stationary, telephones); of melting and decaying microfilms and microfiches now emitting dangerous and toxic odour injurious to health; of audio visual software destroyed by heat and having to be burnt; of books, monographs, journals and newspapers covered by thick layers of dust or eaten up by rats and termites, of thousands of library materials destroyed by rain water from leaking roofs; of unshelved books and other materials lying about in careless abandon; of thousands of library materials lost due to pilfering which goes on unchecked. The minister lamented that 'no one can read the panels' report without being disturbed by a feeling of anguish. These factors, among others, ignite or trigger students' unrest on university campuses (Nwabueze, 1995).

Causes of Students' Unrest

The Longman Dictionary of contemporary English defines unrest as "**lack of calmness, a dissatisfaction especially**" (2002: 1285). One can say that there is **student unrest** when students are dissatisfied and are fighting against certain lapses, and irregularities at local, national or international levels. During such periods, students show their displeasure through agitations, protests and, as a last resort, demonstrations, as an indicator of dissatisfaction and the need to be given attention by authorities concerned.

Several factors are responsible for student unrest on campuses. It may be internal or external problems. Internal factors such as stringent university/ government rules and regulations affecting student behavior on campus, such as dress code and female access to halls of residence; hours of opening and closing of student bar/buttery and university library; representation of students on Boards and committees of council and senate; the academic grading system; irregularity in the supply of light, water, and health facilities; and food service (when universities were still catering for their students).

The 1971 crisis of the University of Ibadan began with the inmates of Nnamdi Azikiwe Hall who complained about the inadequate supply of drinks by the cafeteria manageress. The students demanded that the cafeteria manageress be removed. When the university was still contemplating on this issue, the students started demonstrations. In the end, the V.C. invited the police to quell the unrest. It resulted in a police shooting at students, killing one student, Adekunle Adepeju. On the first anniversary of Kunle Adepeju's death, 1 February 1972, all the then universities staged a peaceful demonstrations in their various campuses. The leaders of NUNS assembled at Ibadan to commemorate the day by laying the wreaths on Kunle's grave.

Although the second anniversary of Kunle's death was successful, the first and the third anniversaries witnessed violence and upheavals. The third anniversary resulted into violence between the students and the police. Since the police did not agree that students should fire a 20-gun salute at the graveside at Malete (Ibadan), students desisted from doing so and the students refused to go to campuses in buses and were dispersed by tear gas and light weapons (as ordered by then commissioner of police, Kafaru Tinubu). This escalated violence in other universities. At the University of Lagos, students kidnapped about six policemen and held them hostage. The students issued bulletins regularly to inform the general public that the

policemen were doing fine and well. On the sixth day, the police command invaded the university of Lagos campus by land, air and lagoon to rescue the kidnapped policemen. At the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, one policeman and an army officer were also held hostage but were later released. All the universities (except Nsukka) were closed down for sometime before they were re-opened. (Ojo, 1995:25)

Secret Cults

Secret cults is among social media through which students device means of solving their social problems. Student crisis on campus are, with each unrest, becoming more ferocious and dangerous than previously. The intrusion of secret cult into student unionism and campus life has brought this change. It involves oath-taking and blood-sucking ceremonies, cases of burglary and house breaking, students keep on dying, getting maimed, and disfigured, being sexually harassed and the orgy goes on, involving sons and daughters of highly placed members of the society, sometimes, acting under the influence of drugs such as cocaine or Indian hemp. (Onyishi, 1994: Ojo, 1995 and Usman, 2007). The tertiary institutions are populated by a disturbing member of homicidal hoodlums, rapists and deviants who commit a variety of crimes. This recently happened at the University of Calabar, May, 2002, Cross River State Polytechnic, August 2002, to mention just a few. Students carry guns, axes, daggers, knives and other dangerous weapons which they use against academic, non-academic and students alike. (Usman, 2007:198)

Various therapeutic approaches could lead to be adopted to relevance or overcome this type of menace on the campus. The therapist or counselor can refer to some constitutional provisions, as therapeutic strategy against cultism. For instance, the federal government in the constitutional provision, section 35 (4) of Nigeria constitution, has stipulated that the freedom of thought, conscience and religion entrenched in the constitution did not protect, nor could it be stretched to cover, any one belonging to a secret society. It continued:

Nothing in this section shall entitle any person to form, take part in the activity or be a member of a secret society; and for the purpose of this subsection a secret society means a society or association not being a solely cultural or religious body that uses signs, oaths, rites or symbols (a) whose meetings or other activities are held in secret and (b) whose meetings are under oath, obligation or other threat to promote the interest of its members or to aid one-another under all circumstances without due regard to merit, fair play or justice, to the detriment of the legitimate expectation of those who are not members (Constitution of Nigeria section 35 (4) in Ojo, 1995).

The fundamental objective of the above provision is to minimize or completely eliminate the adverse effects of extreme favouratism and partisanship of the cultism for which secret societies are known. They are alleged to be characteristics of allocation of scarce resources, amenities, appointments, admissions, promotions and security. There

was a time when the Nigerian army had serious fears that members of secret society were penetrating into its rank and file. There were genuine fears that such invasion might destroy **ESPRIT DE CORPS** with the armed forces, since it was also believed that student army officers were members on the university campuses. The army therefore decided to conduct a search within its rank and file to purge itself of such undesirable elements. It is noteworthy to mention some of these secret cults. There existed in the universities cults such as the pyrates confraternity, Eiyé fraternity, Baccaneers, the Black Nationalists, the Black Cobra, Black Axe, Black Night, Black Barret, Green Barret, Vikings, Maphites, The Flame, The Amazon (women only) The KKK, Neo-Black Morer, Royal Queens, Temple of Adam etc. (Usman, 2007: 195).

The Media

One of the reasons that cause students' unrest is the report of sensitive issues that borders on national or international concerns. Media is alleged to have informed, inflamed, complimented, condemned, supported and rejected actions of students, because of twist of news, and events which eventually aggravate students' reactions, to authorities. For example, the Mohannad commission of inquiry into the Nigerian universities crisis of 1978, alleging that the press coverage of the crisis was a significant factor in the escalation of the crisis.

In a similar vein, the Abisoye panel which in 1986 probed the death of students at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria also blamed the press and advised it to make necessary redress. (Ojo, 1995).

Others are lack of consultation between students and authorities on a variety of issues. Various national or international issues like the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), cost of living, general increase in school fees, subsidy on petroleum products, excessive custom duties on essential commodities like wheat, resulting in high price of bread, had led to students' demonstrations in the past. In addition to the above, there was student unrest on February 13, 1976 during the abortive coup staged by Dimka, when General Murtala was killed. In 1975/76 session, students of the University of Ibadan demonstrated because of the ban on students' politics, the union was dissolved, its account frozen and imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew on the campus. There was also Bayero university crisis on the 7 May, 1977 as a result of students' complaint on poor quality of food, inexperienced kitchen staff and unhygienic condition of the kitchen. Students demanded to be conveyed in buses to town to eat. The university authorities acceded to the students' request and also to get the kitchen staff trained. When hostel and feeding fees were increased, it also led to students' demonstration. When the police shot a student, Akintunde Ojo in the leg, and later died in the way to the hospital, the crisis escalated in A.B.U and four students were killed by the police and resulted into "Ali Must Go" Affairs (Ali, being the then Minister of Education). There were other instances which caused students' unrest such as the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria Rice Crisis; the university of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University crisis of June, 1981 (when a student Bukola Aroogundade headless body was found at the market place). Students demonstrated and three female students and one adult man were killed. A tribunal was set up and the tribunal alleged (to cover up) that among others, found out that the

four deceased students died of electrocution which was cause by electricity pole around May Fair Hotel at Ife.

Student Activism

Student activism is one of the influential device used by students to resolve their differences with university authorities. The Random House Dictionary has defined **ACTIVISM** as “a doctrine or practice of vigorous action to achieve political or social goals.” Nigerian students who are expected to be highly cultured, genial and urbane gentle men and women have turned out to be ruffians and thugs.

As professor Tamuno aptly described the situation, in Ojo (1995: 24), “since the series of students’ unrest in 1957, that kind of activism has often been tolerated by the public as an exhibition of youthful exuberance (delinquency)”.

He continued:

University students also had often seen themselves as mirroring their society and believed as if they constituted the avant-garde of reformist ideas. In that regards, student activist sought recognition by observers outside their respective institutions of learning. Simultaneously, these same radicals, among the generally quiescent groups of students often a vocal minority, asked public functionaries for understanding in their endless demonstrations and protests inside and outside their respective campus walls.

From the foregoing, we need to count on our cultural values and value-orientation, so as to re-educate our youths and to produce effective and well-cultured citizens in our universities.

Issues of Value and Related Concepts

Value refers to a concept accepted in philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, and sociology, and characterizing the socio-historical significance for society and the personalized meaning for individuals of certain realities. Value system refers to set of values as a phenomenon in the society.

Value orientation is an ideological, political, moral aesthetic and other foundations, for personal assessment of and attitude to surrounding reality. Value re-orientation, according to Ramalingam (2006), therefore refers to a revisit of the process of orientation with new ideas, innovations, policies and regulations and attitude to surrounding institution. (Ramalingam, 2006).

Values are standards, criteria for rules which give direction and determine how we act, what we consider best and what we select from available choices. Value represent the final goals of our intentions. They indicate what we have chosen from available alternatives. In other words, our choices are a reflection of our values. They show inner-self. They portray the kind of person we are. Therefore, our cultural traditional traits, our philosophy of life, societal needs, aspirations and requirements, our interests, what we value and are not restrictive or at the detriment of the society are referred to as our value. These values are imbibed through orientation and re-orientations (Usman, 20 10:45). Value Clarification refers to identification through selection from alternatives of available value. In the value clarification process, or genuineness of certain value, these, according to Adedoyin (1994:44), include:

1. Choice made through intrinsic interest
2. Choosing from among alternatives
3. Choosing after thoughtful consideration of its genuiness
4. Prizing, cherishing and cost effective as self-fulfilling
5. Affirming and utilizing the alternative as self-fulfilling
6. Adapting to the value trait or system
7. Repeating the action and adjusting to new ideas, opinions, regulations and policies you have valued.

Value laden issues such as principles, theories, ideologies, work ethics, policies and roles established in any environment are characteristics which could qualify one to live or work in an environment. Traits such as spirit of effective citizenship, nationalism, obedience, loyalty, cooperation, unity, perseverance, honesty, sincerity are values clarification which could be imbibed through reorientation programmes.

In another dimension, students sometimes, tend to experience stress, as they get to new environment, or conflicting messages and reactions in schools or organizations, because of some temporary social problems in establishing self-identity and self-esteem. It is a period of increased thinking, emotionality and mood swings, ranging from depression to the height of elation (Nair, Paw and John, 2004). Fridolin (1983) in Oluwa Timilehin (2011: 12) stated that it has been well established that, regularly administered most antidepressant treatment-pharmacotherapy and electro convulsive therapy (ECT) as therapeutic device reduce the sensitive adenylate.

If one is suffering from anxiety in a new environment or exposed to new experience, there are no drugs of comparable value to ease or totally correct the situation-psychotherapy would be of immense psycho therapeutic device to help people who are to receive new training and are particularly, not psychologically balanced. It could be adopted particularly, during crisis situations as do occur among students in the university community.

For a comprehensive perception and understanding of the dynamics of crisis/conflict, Nyendu, Ocho and Okeke (1997:146), presented a framework as follows:

Accordingly, the following therapeutic strategies have been found effective in the management of crisis or conflict, namely: (1) Dialogue, (2) Arbitration, (3) Boxing the problem, (4) Confrontation (5) Neglect/Silence.

1. **Dialogue:** Individual are brought together to discuss and iron out issues or problem involved. The parties express their feelings, grievances. A well handled cases could attain healthy and successful end.
2. **Arbitration:** Is a process by which arbitration/arbitrator serves as peace maker is employed to interrogate and resolve or settle crisis among the members involved.
3. **Boxing the problem:** This is a strategy adapted to identify critical area by exposing the triviality or the- much- ado- about- nothing inherent in the crisis, sometimes subjected to debate or argument and counter-arguments.
4. **Confrontation:** Victims of the crisis/conflict are made to express and answer each others questions as well as neutral groups, so as to resolve the crisis at stake.

5. **Neglect/Silence:** This strategy can be adopted by a leader by neglecting or being silent over problems that have erupted so as to quell the emotions and tension of the combatants. Care should be taken in adopting this therapy because neglect or silence sometimes may gather momentum to erupt or boomerang and may do more harm than good.

There are other therapeutic strategies that could be adopted as crisis or conflict resolution strategies such as effective catharsis (systematic desensitization); super-ordinate goals (to make members work together to establish cooperation); empathy (appealing to clients in areas of emotional feelings on humanitarian ground); the Grip theory (sharing of responsibilities to conflicting combatants); culture of civility (through appeals, lectures, group therapy, preaching etc) and; synergy (providing essential things needed and the use of influential personnel to intervene (establishing cordiality) in the crisis resolution.

Conclusion

According to Denga (1986), he opined that in our present day era of value-reorientation, many psychologists argue that the starting point for value-clarification and values crystallization is the home or the school. It is pertinent therefore that all types of values (social, cultural, traditional, aesthetic, artistic, religious, spiritual etc) should be assessed, weighed and 'valued' before one organizes a re-orientation for the benefit of re-trainees and re-trainers. As Ipaye (1986:28) opined that counsellor's values influence the client. It can be concluded therefore that credible values be identified and clarified as therapeutic device for all clients.

Recommendations

Based on the discussions so far, the following recommendations are proffered for consideration, viz a viz:

1. Adequate funds and functional facilities be provided for all Nigerian universities so as to reduce complaints and student crisis.
2. An effective therapist, or crisis/conflict manager should adopt series of therapeutic strategies for crisis resolution among students in the university community. He should emphasize on disadvantages of student unrest.
3. A counsellor, therapist or conflict manager should make adequate investigation and acquire enough information about the causes of crisis before adopting any technique for crisis resolution within or outside university environment. He should de-emphasize student crisis.
4. Personalities or stake holders who command respect could be involved in certain circumstances in resolving crisis on university campuses.
5. Crisis preventions through re-orientation is better than crisis resolution. It is said that 'prevention is better than cure', 'to be warned is to be fore-armed' and 'a stitch in time saves nine'.
6. Proper monitoring and reorientation of various groups through neutral agents should be employed so as to detect, fore see vulnerable and volatile areas of crisis and to guide against them. Re orientation should be periodical and regular.

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