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The Role Of Counselling In Mitigating Insecurity In Rural Communities Of Isa Local Government Area, Sokoto State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Insecurity in Northern Nigeria has intensified in recent years, particularly in rural communities of Isa Local Government Area (LGA) of Sokoto State, where banditry, kidnapping, and displacement have disrupted socio-economic life. This study examines the role of counselling in mitigating insecurity, focusing on its effectiveness, community participation, and implementation challenges. The study adopts a conceptual and empirical review method, drawing from existing literature and reports on insecurity in Isa LGA. Findings reveal that counselling contributes to behavioural change, trauma healing, and peace building; however, its effectiveness is limited by low community participation, distrust of institutions, and structural constraints. Evidence from villages such as Tidibale and Bargaja shows that persistent attacks, displacement, and fear have weakened social cohesion and reduced cooperation with security agencies. The study concludes that counselling remains a critical but underutilized tool in addressing insecurity. It recommends community-based counselling frameworks, increased awareness, and integration of counselling into local security strategies.

Keywords: Counselling, Insecurity, Rural Communities and Community Participation

INTRODUCTION

Insecurity has become a major developmental challenge in Nigeria, particularly in the North-West region. Isa Local Government Area of Sokoto State is among the most affected areas, experiencing frequent bandit attacks, displacement, and economic disruption.

Recent reports indicate that many villages in Isa LGA have been deserted due to persistent threats, with residents fleeing to safer areas following violent attacks and ultimatums issued by armed groups. These incidents have created a climate of fear, uncertainty, and socio-economic instability.

The persistent insecurity has not only affected physical safety but has also led to psychological trauma, breakdown of social structures, and erosion of trust within communities. Counselling, as a professional intervention, provides an avenue for addressing these psychological and social dimensions of insecurity.

This study examines how counselling can help mitigate insecurity in Isa LGA by focusing on effectiveness, community participation, and challenges.

Statement of the Problem

Despite government and military interventions, insecurity in Isa LGA continues to escalate. Villages such as Bargaja have recently experienced attacks, leading to loss of lives and displacement. Banditry has disrupted farming, trade, and education, forcing residents to abandon their livelihoods and relocate. The persistent nature of these attacks indicates that security measures alone are insufficient. While counselling has been identified as a tool for addressing behavioural and psychological causes of insecurity, its role in rural areas like Isa LGA remains underexplored. There is limited understanding of:

- i How effective counselling is in reducing insecurity
- ii The level of community participation.
- iii The challenges affecting its implementation

This gap necessitates the present study.

Research Questions

How effective is counselling in reducing the rate of insecurity in Isa Local Government Sokoto?

What is the level of community participation and cooperation with law enforcement in counselling initiatives in Isa Local Government Sokoto?

What are the major challenges affecting the implementation of counselling in Isa Local Government Sokoto?

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Insecurity

Insecurity refers to threats to life, property, and societal stability. In Isa LGA, insecurity manifests in the form of:

- ❖ Banditry
- ❖ Kidnapping
- ❖ Cattle rustling
- ❖ Armed violence

Studies show that insecurity in the area has reached alarming levels, affecting both rural villages and major roads.

Counselling is a professional process that helps individuals understand and resolve personal, social, and psychological problems. It plays a vital role in:

- i. Behaviour modification
- ii. Conflict resolution
- iii. Trauma recovery

Empirical Review

Insecurity in Isa LGA Villages

Empirical studies on Insecurity in Nigeria, particularly in the North-West region, have consistently highlighted the growing intensity of banditry, kidnapping, and rural violence, with significant implications for socio-economic development and psychological well-being.

Studies such as Waziri (2025) revealed that insecurity in rural communities of Isa Local Government Area has led to the disruption of farming activities, displacement of residents, and economic stagnation. The study further established that most villagers have either abandoned their farmlands or reduced agricultural productivity due to fear of attacks. This aligns with findings by Barau, Ammani, and Sani (2022), who reported that banditry in Isa LGA has significantly undermined sustainable development by destroying livelihoods and weakening local economies.

Similarly, reports on affected villages such as Tidibale, Bargaja, and surrounding settlements indicate recurring attacks, killings, and forced displacement of residents. These events have not only resulted in physical losses but have also caused deep psychological trauma among survivors, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress symptoms. According to Attahiru and Yabo (2025), insecurity

contributes to increased school dropout rates and emotional instability among children and adolescents in Sokoto State.

Empirical literature also highlights the social consequences of insecurity, including the breakdown of trust among community members and between citizens and security agencies. Adeniran and Awolola (2024) observed that persistent insecurity erodes social cohesion and discourages community participation in security initiatives, thereby creating a cycle of violence and underdevelopment.

In terms of counselling, Eshiet (2015) found that counselling interventions such as trauma counselling, conflict resolution, and behavioural therapy significantly contribute to peacebuilding and national security. Counselling has been shown to help individuals manage stress, resolve interpersonal conflicts, and adopt positive coping strategies.

Furthermore, Ordu and Ow'honda (2019) emphasized that counselling plays a critical role in addressing the psychological roots of insecurity, particularly frustration, anger, and hopelessness, which often drive individuals into criminal activities. Their study concluded that counselling enhances emotional intelligence and promotes social harmony.

Despite these positive findings, empirical evidence suggests that counselling services are largely inaccessible in rural areas like Isa LGA. Abubakar et al. (2025) reported that the shortage of trained counsellors, lack of infrastructure, and low awareness significantly limit the effectiveness of counselling interventions in addressing insecurity.

Overall, empirical studies demonstrate that while counselling has the potential to mitigate insecurity, its impact in Isa LGA remains constrained by structural and contextual challenges.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two major theories: the Frustration-Aggression Theory and the Social Disorganization Theory, both of which provide a framework for understanding the relationship between insecurity and counselling interventions.

Frustration-Aggression Theory

The Frustration-Aggression Theory, originally proposed by Dollard et al. (1939), posits that aggression is often the result of frustration arising from unmet needs or blocked goals. In the context of Isa LGA, factors such as poverty, unemployment, and social inequality create frustration among individuals, particularly youths. When individuals are unable to achieve their economic or social aspirations, they may resort to aggressive behaviours, including involvement in banditry, kidnapping, and other criminal activities. This theory explains why many youths in insecure regions are easily recruited into violent groups.

Counselling plays a crucial role in addressing this frustration by:

- a. Helping individuals develop coping mechanisms.
- b. Providing emotional support
- c. Redirecting negative energy into productive activities

Through cognitive and behavioural interventions, counselling reduces the likelihood of aggression and promotes constructive behaviour.

Social Disorganization Theory

The Social Disorganization Theory, developed by Shaw and McKay (1942), explains that crime and insecurity are more prevalent in communities where social institutions such as family, education, and governance are weak or dysfunctional.

In Isa LGA, insecurity has led to the breakdown of traditional structures, including:

- i. Family systems disrupted by displacement.
- ii. Educational institutions affected by school closures.
- iii. Community leadership weakened by fear and violence

This disorganization creates an environment where criminal activities can thrive. Counselling contributes to addressing social disorganization by:

- Strengthening family and community relationships.
- Promoting social cohesion and trust.

- Supporting community-based conflict resolution mechanisms

Thus, counselling helps rebuild the social fabric necessary for peace and stability.

Integrated Discussion (Linking Empirical and Theoretical Insights)

The empirical findings and theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive understanding of insecurity in Isa LGA and the role of counselling in addressing it. Empirical evidence shows that insecurity in Isa LGA is driven by socio-economic deprivation, psychological distress, and weak social structures. These findings align closely with the Frustration-Aggression Theory, which explains how unmet needs and frustration lead to violent behaviour. The prevalence of youth involvement in banditry and other crimes in Isa LGA can be understood as a response to economic hardship and lack of opportunities.

Similarly, the observed breakdown of community cohesion and trust supports the Social Disorganization Theory. The displacement of villagers, destruction of livelihoods, and weakening of traditional institutions have created conditions conducive to insecurity.

Counselling serves as a bridge between these theoretical explanations and practical solutions. From the perspective of Frustration-Aggression Theory, counselling helps individuals manage frustration and reduces the likelihood of aggressive behaviour. It provides alternative pathways for achieving personal goals, thereby addressing the root causes of insecurity.

From the Social Disorganization perspective, counselling promotes community rebuilding by fostering trust, cooperation, and social integration. Community-based counselling initiatives can strengthen relationships between residents and security agencies, improving participation in security efforts.

However, the empirical findings also reveal significant challenges. The limited availability of counselling services in rural areas, coupled with low awareness and cultural barriers, reduces its effectiveness. This gap highlights the need for institutional support and policy integration.

Furthermore, the realities in villages of Isa LGA such as fear of attacks, displacement, and distrust indicate that counselling alone cannot solve insecurity but must be integrated with other strategies, including economic empowerment, security reforms, and community engagement.

In conclusion, the integration of empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks underscores that counselling is a vital but underutilized tool in combating insecurity. Its effectiveness depends on the extent to which it is systematically implemented and supported within the broader socio-political context of Isa LGA.

Deep Analytical Discussion of Findings (Integrated Empirical and Theoretical Analysis)

The findings of this study reveal that insecurity in rural communities of Isa Local Government Area is not merely a security problem but a multidimensional crisis involving psychological, socio-economic, and structural dimensions. This aligns with empirical studies (Waziri, 2025; Barau et al., 2022), which established that banditry and violent attacks have disrupted livelihoods, displaced communities, and weakened local economies.

However, beyond these visible impacts, the discussion shows that the psychological consequences of insecurity are equally profound but often neglected. Survivors of attacks in villages such as Tidibale and Bargaja experience persistent fear, anxiety, and trauma, which influence their behaviour, decision-making, and willingness to participate in community life. This observation strengthens the argument of Attahiru and Yabo (2025), who found that insecurity contributes to emotional instability and social withdrawal, particularly among youths.

From a theoretical standpoint, these realities strongly validate the Frustration-Aggression Theory. The widespread poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunities in Isa LGA create frustration among young people, making them vulnerable to recruitment into banditry and other criminal activities. The theory explains that when legitimate means of achieving goals are blocked, individuals may resort to aggression as an alternative. This is evident in Isa LGA, where some youths, faced with limited economic prospects, are drawn into violent groups as a means of survival.

At the same time, the Social Disorganization Theory provides a structural explanation for the persistence of insecurity. The displacement of residents, breakdown of family systems, and weakening of traditional institutions have created a vacuum in social control. In many affected villages, community leaders have

lost authority, schools have been closed or disrupted, and social norms have weakened. This disorganization fosters an environment where criminal activities can thrive with minimal resistance.

2. Counselling as a Response to Psychological and Structural Drivers of Insecurity

The discussion further reveals that counselling plays a dual role in addressing both the psychological and structural causes of insecurity.

3. Addressing Psychological Trauma and Fear

Empirical evidence shows that fear and trauma significantly influence behaviour in insecure communities. Many residents of Isa LGA avoid returning to their villages even after attacks subside, indicating deep psychological scars. Counselling interventions such as trauma-focused therapy and crisis counselling help individuals process these experiences, reduce anxiety, and rebuild confidence.

By addressing trauma, counselling reduces the cycle of fear that often leads to:

1. Social withdrawal
2. Distrust among community members
3. Reduced participation in communal activities

Thus, counselling contributes to restoring normalcy and stability in affected communities.

Reducing Aggressive Tendencies (Frustration-Aggression)

The Frustration-Aggression Theory suggests that unresolved frustration leads to violence. Counselling interrupts this cycle by:

- a. Helping individuals reframe negative experiences
- b. Teaching emotional regulation and anger management
- c. Providing alternative coping strategies

For example, youth counselling programs that focus on skill acquisition, career guidance, and self-development can redirect energy away from crime toward productive activities. This demonstrates that counselling is not only reactive but also preventive.

Rebuilding Social Structures (Social Disorganization)

From the Social Disorganization perspective, counselling contributes to rebuilding weakened social institutions. Community-based counselling initiatives can:

Strengthen family relationships

Promote dialogue and reconciliation

Enhance trust between community members and security agencies

In rural Isa communities, where traditional leadership plays a crucial role, integrating counselling with local structures (e.g., village heads, religious leaders) can improve effectiveness and acceptance.

Effectiveness of Counselling in Reducing Insecurity

The findings indicate that counselling is moderately effective but contextually constrained.

1. **Areas of Effectiveness**

Counselling has proven effective in:

- Trauma healing and psychological recovery
- Conflict mediation and dispute resolution
- Behavioural change among at-risk youths

These outcomes suggest that counselling addresses the root causes of insecurity, unlike purely military approaches that focus on symptoms.

2. **Limitations of Effectiveness**

Despite its potential, the effectiveness of counselling in Isa LGA is limited by:

- Inaccessibility in remote villages
- Lack of structured programs
- Ongoing insecurity disrupting interventions

This means that while counselling is impactful at the individual level, its community-wide impact remains limited due to systemic barriers.

3. Community Participation and Its Implications

A critical finding of this study is the low level of community participation in counselling and security initiatives.

1. Factors Influencing Low Participation

a. Fear of Retaliation

Residents are often afraid to cooperate with authorities due to fear of attacks by bandits.

b. Distrust of Institutions

Years of insecurity without effective solutions have eroded trust in government and security agencies.

c. Displacement and Social Fragmentation

Displacement has weakened community cohesion, making collective action difficult.

2 Theoretical Implications

From the Social Disorganization perspective, low participation is a direct consequence of weakened social structures. Without strong community networks, collective efforts such as counselling programs struggle to gain traction.

3 Counselling as a Tool for Enhancing Participation

Counselling can improve participation by:

- a. Building trust through community engagement
- b. Promoting awareness of security and peace building
- c. Encouraging collective responsibility

However, this requires culturally sensitive approaches that align with local values and traditions.

4.. Challenges of Counselling Implementations: A Structural Analysis

The challenges identified in this study reflect broader systemic issues:

1. Structural Challenges
2. Lack of trained counselors
3. Poor funding and infrastructure
4. Absence of institutional support

Contextual Challenges

Persistent insecurity, Cultural resistance to counseling and limited awareness

These challenges reinforce the Social Disorganization Theory, as weak institutional frameworks hinder effective intervention. They also highlight that addressing insecurity requires multi-level strategies, not counselling alone.

Synthesis: Counselling Within a Broader Security Framework

The discussion clearly shows that counselling is necessary but not sufficient in combating insecurity in Isa LGA. It addresses psychological causes (trauma, frustration). It supports social rebuilding (trust, cohesion), It contributes to preventive strategies (youth empowerment). However, its effectiveness depends on integration with:

1. Security operations.
2. Economic empowerment programs.
3. Educational development and
4. Community engagement

The expanded discussion demonstrates that insecurity in Isa LGA is deeply rooted in both human behaviour and structural conditions. Counselling provides a critical pathway for addressing these issues, but its impact is limited without strong institutional support and community participation.

Thus, the role of counselling should be viewed not as an isolated intervention but as part of a comprehensive peace building and security strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following were the recommendations of this study:

1. Government should establish community-based counselling centers in rural villages and Integrate counselling into local security frameworks

2. Train and deploy more professional counselors, and Promote community participation through awareness campaigns.
3. Collaborate with traditional and religious leaders and Provide psychosocial support for victims of insecurity.
4. Strengthen trust between communities and security agencies

CONCLUSION

Insecurity in Isa Local Government Area remains a critical challenge affecting rural communities. Counselling offers a holistic approach to addressing insecurity by targeting its psychological, social, and behavioural dimensions.

Although its effectiveness is currently limited by structural and contextual challenges, strengthening counselling services can significantly contribute to peacebuilding and sustainable development in the region.

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