ECHOES OF RESILIENCE: RETELLING THE MEMORIES OF TRAUMA AMONG SURVIVORS OF BOKO HARAM'S VIOLENCE AT THE INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CENTER, EDO-STATE (NIGERIA)

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ABSTRACT

The impact of Boko Haram's violence on the general populace has been extensively studied, yet there is a paucity of research addressing the traumas experienced by young women and children within the context of the International Christian Centre. This study aims to fill this gap by conducting in-depth interviews with survivors of Boko Haram's violence and the managers of the Christian Centre to investigate the psychosocial effects of traumatic memories on young women and children. Additionally, it examines the coping mechanisms employed by survivors to deal with these traumatic memories. The study argues for a nuanced understanding of traumatic impacts, drawing on both Freudian psychoanalysis and cultural-specific perspectives. It concludes by proposing a framework that combines elements of Freudian psychoanalysis with Christian reconfigurations of sociocultural contexts, emphasizing attachment to God as a source of resilience for survivors. Through this interdisciplinary approach, the research aims to offer valuable insights into the complexities of trauma and resilience, thereby contributing to the advancement and practical interventions in the field of trauma psychology.

Keywords: *Boko Haram, Trauma ("act out", "work through"), International Christian Centre, Survivors, Resilience (coping abilities/strategies).*

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In the wake of the displacement of residents in north-eastern Nigeria due to the actions of Boko Haram, significant challenges have emerged regarding access to essential resources such as food, shelter, and clean water for the affected population (Adewale, 2016). These internally displaced people have experienced extreme violence, trauma, the aftereffects of conflict, and challenges adjusting to normal life. (Obikaze & Onuoha, 2016). Numerous studies have examined the psychological trauma experienced by internally displaced people residing in camps in Northern Nigeria (Imasuen, 2015).

Furthermore, the government's failure to adequately support these displaced persons has resulted in trauma re-experiencing, intrusive memories, distressing dreams, and insomnia (Herman, 1992; Bloom, 1997). While Afolaranmi's research (2020) addressed the challenges faced by migrated displaced persons in Ogbomosho and Adejumo et al.'s (2019) comparative study explored the plight of internally displaced persons in Edo State and Abuja, there remains a scarcity of research specifically focusing on the trauma experienced by displaced individuals, particularly young women and children who sought refuge in Nigeria's south-south region within Christian centres. Apart from Iweze's (2022) examination of the plight faced by internally displaced persons at a Christian centre in Edo State, Nigeria's south-south, this study aims to address this gap by analysing the psychological impacts of trauma through the lens of Freudian analysis and

socio-cultural factors, with an emphasis on attachment to God. Thus, this study integrates Freudian ideologies, cultural perspectives, and Christian principles to understand psychological trauma in the context of Boko Haram's violence.

There is currently little research available on the psychological trauma that Boko Haram inflicts on IDPs, particularly on young women and children in the setting of a Christian centre. Prior research has concentrated on the many political, religious, and socioeconomic elements that led to the formation of Boko Haram, the Nigerian government's response, and the impact on the populace (Adesoji, 2010; Zenn, 2013). Additionally reviewed literatures have concentrated on the origin, social profile and motivations for Boko Harams growth (Aghedo, 2014; Langer, Godefroidt, & Meuleman 2017; Kendhammer and McCain 2018) as well as other literatures addressing the tactics that may be used to engage with Boko Haram's violence (Agbiboa 2014; Weeraratne 2017).

There is still a dearth of writing on Boko Haram victims, especially young women and children, despite the works of Oriola (2017) and Okoli and Azom (2019) discussing the group's use of objectification, sexual, and gender violence against women. This research expands upon journalist Bauer's (2016) exploration of the political and historical context of the Islamist terror group in Stolen Girls, as well as the narrative of violence and the voices of young women and children ensnared in the organization's web. Additionally, it engages with Ajayi's work (2020) on the lived experiences of women under displacement and their agency. Thus, this study aims to narrate the stories of children and young women who were caught up in Boko Haram's violence and how that violence ties into daily life and manifests itself in ways that express the consequences of psychological trauma , and the relational application of Freudian principles, including the resignification of trauma and religious attachment (Maltby and Hall, 2012; Dura ~-Vila, Littlewood & Leavey 2013; Bandak 2017; Itzhak 2022). Further, it expands the literature on trauma impacts as well as the body of knowledge about the Church's assistance, with reference to the International Christian Centre, operating as a missionary and religious organization, for internally displaced persons as well as their coping strategy (Adejumo et al., 2022; Iweze 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social scientists have long worked to comprehend the impact of terrorism on people, communities, and society (Sprang 2003). Social scientists, particularly anthropologists, have used ethnographic studies and survey research to investigate the consequences of terrorism. While the area of terrorism studies is evolving, several noteworthy discoveries have arisen from trauma studies, which aim to give essential insights into post-terrorism experience. Findings from other disciplines of study, such as psychology, have also enriched our understanding of trauma (Herman, 1992; Bloom, 1997).

For instance, anthropologists have studied trauma as the culmination of events which bring people to the very edges of existence, in addition to the various ways they staged to navigate their way back, usually fundamentally altering (Crapanzano, 1985; Levi Strauss, 1963; Obeyesekere, 1984; Spiro, 1987). For example, Quarantelli (1985) discovered that persons or individuals react differently to catastrophic impacts. According to him, there are two competing viewpoints on the mental health of people in dangerous circumstances. The first viewpoint holds that life experiences, including sociocultural influences, might cause a person to perceive an act as traumatic and acquire severe distress, whilst for another, it may have little or no impact (Hall 2003). According to Quarantelli (1985), these two viewpoints might be viewed as "additional versus oppositional" (190). This meant that the question was not whether terrorism is

fundamentally a traumatic experience, but whether exposure to terrorist activities results in traumatic experiences. Waugh's (2001) chapter on *Managing Terrorism as an Environmental Hazard*, on the other hand, emphasizes that terrorism is envisioned as a devastating occurrence. He contends that terrorist acts not only horrify and mentally disorganize victims, but also those around them. In fact, it disrupts their daily lives, or what Scary (1985) refers to as the unmaking and remaking of worlds. In a similar line, Casarez-Levison (1992) identified the psychological repercussions of traumatic events: rejection, fear, humiliation, embarrassment, rage, and loss. Other studies have found that victims of violent and nonviolent exposure experience anxiety, avoidance, isolation, anger, sadness, low self-esteem, and an increased desire for social support (Norris, Kaniasty, and Thompson, 1997). When pushed to the brink of physical extinction, the links that bind a person to ordinary life become stressed, warped, and even ripped; often irreparably so. Victims must cope with the significance of the trauma as well as the short- and long-term impacts of the terrorist act that adjust to the traumatic occurrence. According to Figley (1985), the process of recovery necessitates a shift from a disorganized psychological state (as a victim) to an ordered feeling of well-being. In the 1980s, the main psychological literatures presented "psychological and psychiatric understandings of trauma (as) linear, fixed, and presuppose a very particular set of agentic relationships" (Lester, 2013:756).

However, there was a change in understanding of traumatic (edge-of-existence experience) events from psychological processes to cultural constructs in the mid-1990s (Young 1995). Work in this direction (anthropological literatures) began to focus on how culturally mediated behaviours, institutions, and symbols were strategies of situating individuals in the world who had previously faced adversity (Obeyesekere 1990). These anthropological studies give insight on how the unfolding of traumatic events interacts with the envisioned routes to recovery. Lately, the anthropological perspective has expanded significantly to examine how people, groups, and global organizations appropriate and employ specific aspects of trauma in a methodical manner to accomplish predetermined objectives (Fassin and Rechtman, 2009; Robben and Suarez-Orozco, 2000). Developmental neuroscience, cultural neurobiology, and neuroanthropology, for example, have produced innovative scholarly works (Collura and Lende, 2012; Kirmayer, Lemelson, and Brand, 2007) that address political and economic issues instead of the material causes of psychological trauma (Adams, van Hattum, and English, 2009). In addition to Sigmund Freud and many others, different strands of anthropological literature have emphasized the need to transcend beyond the unconscious process of trauma and toward tactical adoptions of the categories of experience (Van de Kork 2003; Bussey and Wise, 2007). This appropriation leads to the realization that people—especially those affected by terrorist acts—actually suffer and are capable of persevering through difficult circumstances before rising above them. Derluyn and her colleagues' (2013) works explore how individuals, particularly child soldiers, continue to live their lives by reshaping their experiences to fit into preexisting categories, or what they refer to as a "relational understanding of trauma."

Lester (2013:754) describes this as "ongoing, iterative, continuous processes of meaning making that emerge in relationship with others, across a variety of levels and contexts, and over time." The power to "sheer us off from our expected connections with others, from our perceived social supports, from our basic sense of safety..." (ibid) is what defines trauma. In keeping with the relational aspect of trauma, Reis (2013) demonstrates how trauma knowledge extends beyond individual experience by including collective enterprise amid the landscape of war, starvation, and illness in Sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, Nations (2013) illustrates how Brazilian moms who let their sick children die present their loss as the pinnacle of love and divine will, drawing on the anguish of violence. The study conducted by De Jong (2013) on the Kiyang-yang (KKY) cult in Guinea-Bissau highlights the many ontological phases where trauma experiences lead to rupture

and the subsequent stages of recovery. There are not many literatures that concentrate on trauma-related violence, particularly that of Boko Haram, even though these anthropological studies concentrated on the horrific experiences brought on by other ranges of violence.

This current research is in conversation with studies undertaken by Atilola et al. in 2015 on the consequences of terrorism in Nigeria. Furthermore, it is consistent with the findings of Chinwokwu and Arop in 2014, which emphasize the typically devastating impacts of violence on children as well as the research by Amusan and Ejoke (2017) which critically examined the psychological effects of Boko Haram ruthless attacks. Nonetheless, it contributes further to the discourses by demonstrating how survivors' narratives on Boko Haram's induced trauma intersect with their everyday lives and emerge in ways that shape their sense of self, personhood, and meaning construction, particularly among young women and children. Hence, this study drawing on the works of Freud seeks to explore how survivors react to the psycho-social aftermath of trauma, either by 'acting out' or 'working through' their traumatic experiences, as echoed by Bond and Craps (2020). This investigation takes place within the historical, socio-cultural, and religious contexts. As a result, this research bridges the gap in the extant literature by adding to our knowledge of trauma and resilience by using an integrated approach that includes the interplay of socio-cultural, religious, and psychological elements of Freudian principles within the setting of the International Christian Centre in Edo State, Nigeria. The aim of this work was to rediscover the specific application of Freudian principles that ties into a relational and culture specific understanding of trauma (Kevers and Lucia 2013; Donn 2017).

Theorizing Trauma

The theoretical framework of this study resides at the intersection of trauma theories, notably those propounded by Sigmund Freud, and socio-cultural theories articulated by scholars in anthropology, religion, sociology, and psychology as mechanisms of resilience.

Trauma theory encompasses diverse perspectives originating from various academic disciplines. It provides a framework for comprehending the effects of sexual abuse, neglect, terrorism, and violence on human well-being, relationships, and daily life (Hazvinei, 2013). For instance, Freud's investigation into female hysteria contributed to the development of trauma theories. Freud postulated that trauma undermines an individual's sense of self and continues to exert delayed adverse effects, leading to involuntary symptoms (Herman, 1994). According to Freud, these symptoms include feelings of helplessness, overwhelming impact, and repetitive behaviors aimed at mastering the traumatic experience (Hazvinei, 2013). Moreover, Freud contended that an experience becomes traumatic upon its revival in memory, suggesting that trauma evolves through deferred action (Hazvinei, 2013).

Central to psychoanalytical approaches to trauma is the concept of Nachträglichkeit, or deferred action, as proposed by Freud (1981). This study aims to elucidate Freud's findings, particularly the controversy surrounding how minor stressors can rekindle trauma and trigger delayed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), resulting in experiences such as haunting dreams, sadness, and fear (Bistoen, Vanheule, & Craps, 2014).

Furthermore, this study seeks to integrate Freudian analysis of trauma with socio-cultural theories to enrich the former's understanding. Socio-cultural theories underscore the influence of societal and cultural factors on the experience and interpretation of trauma. These theories emphasize the role of social support, religious beliefs, cultural norms, and historical context in shaping individuals' responses to trauma, thereby fostering resilience (Visser, 2015). Within the scope of this research, victims of Boko Haram have demonstrated various resilient coping mechanisms,

influenced by Christian principles deeply embedded in their socio-cultural context. These mechanisms include attachment to God, reliance on grace, notions of sacrifice and suffering, prayer, scripture, spiritual renewal, and expressions of Christian love.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a qualitative approach to explore the trauma experienced by survivors of Boko Haram at the International Christian Centre. Methodologies included participant observation and semi-structured interviews, with a particular focus on young women and children. Korac (2003) highlights the value of qualitative interviewing in accessing participants' lived experiences, a sentiment echoed in similar studies involving vulnerable populations (Chase, 2010; Miller et al., 2008). This approach offers flexibility tailored to individual circumstances, facilitating exploration of diverse themes and allowing theories to emerge organically (Nı´ Raghallaigh, 2011). Life narratives were employed to understand participants' psychological and sociocultural conditions. Data collection involved personal interactions, direct observation, and interviews with both survivors and Center management. Fourteen individuals victimized by Boko Haram, including seven young women (aged 18-22) and seven children (three boys, four girls under 14), participated with consent obtained from Centre's authorities. Apart from the Centre's coordinator who requested his real name to be used throughout the interviews, pseudonyms were used to anonymize identities, and the Centre's management were also interviewed. Interviews were conducted in English with Pidgin English where necessary. Qualitative analysis utilized coding to transcribe interview data, focusing on extended paragraphs and conversations to prioritize participant voices (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Nı´ Raghallaigh 2011). This approach identified various storylines, including accounts of psychological trauma and coping mechanisms, particularly through a Christian lens.

Results and Findings

The findings of this study, derived from qualitative analysis, illustrate the interpretations of the lived experiences of survivors. The research highlights the convergence of Freudian analysis as well as other trauma theorists, particularly the phenomenon of delayed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) induced by minor stressors, with socio-cultural context. This synthesis offers insights into trauma comprehension and resilience, enriched through a Christian lens, exemplified by the attachment to God evident in various Christian practices.

The selling of wares at the Christian Centre reinitiated trauma re-experiencing.

Freud (1981) proposed that dreams, particularly distressing ones, play a central role in the re-experiencing of trauma, contributing to the concept of Nachträglichkeit, or delayed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) triggered by minor stressors. Underlying the conceptualization of repetitive phenomena or nachträglichkeit Freud revised and expanded his theory to articulate that the reliving of past experiences occurs outside the sphere of "one's will and consciousness" (Halfon and Weinstein, 2016: S122). In relating to these past experiences or trauma, Freud (1961) differentiated between two forms of repetition, one of these aids in strengthening the ego to advance "toward a representational structure", while the other tethers to the breakdown of representation (S123). Regarding the former, Freud spoke in terms of repetition of painful experiences or memories as a means of developing the signal anxiety that will invariably mitigate the effect of trauma. Thus:

> Anxiety is . . . on the one hand an expectation of a trauma, and on the other, a repetition of it in a mitigated form. . .. The ego, which experienced the trauma passively, now repeats it actively in a weakened version, in the hope of being able itself to direct its course (quoted in Halfon and Weinstein, 2016: S123).

The point here is that the repetition of these painful experiences reflects trauma memories induced by Boko Haram's violence that speaks to the living condition of some of the centre's survivors.

In our extensive interviews with survivors, particularly young women and children, distressing dreams and flashbacks emerged as focal points in the recollection of traumatic experiences related to Boko Haram violence. Notably, survivors recounted how seemingly minor stressors like thunderstorms, strong winds, and engaging in commerce or selling of wares at the centre rekindled memories of their encounters with Boko Haram, characterized by symptoms such as numbness and communication difficulties. The nightmares and flashbacks described represent specific manifestations, unique to this context and not easily generalized to other situations, through which the unconscious mind grapples with unintegrated traumatic memories. This aligns with Freud's notion that trauma is "not simply registered by the unconscious but is always mediated by fantasy" (Meek, 2010:27). Mama Emma[1], for instance, expressed:

> Even the selling of pure water in the Christian Centre often brought memories of the market in which I sold my wares (sobbing)… I watched my husband and sons killed from afar… I could still hear their voices and plea for mercy even in my dreams as well as when I am at work (chuckles to herself and freezes). Other women told me that I often exclaim Bornu! Bornu! while I am sleeping... But life must go on!

According to Freud, the reoccurrence of traumatic events or incidents in dreams is "produced through an elaborate, unconscious mode of thought called 'dreamwork', where repressed unconscious wishes find expression and fulfilment in a disguised or hidden form in our dreams" (Edkins, 2003:38). This dream-work involves the unconscious ciphering of latent dreams (like sex wishes) into manifest dreams (events) because of shielding the subject from the trauma of the original incident or primal realm (Freud, 1991)[2]. There are three ideas relating to dreamwork that are valuable in exploring the notion of trauma memories. These are condensation, displacement, and transformation. Alain Tschudin (2015:58), gives a basic understanding of these three components by quoting the works of Freud:

> condensation, by which process the manifest dream has a smaller content than the latent one and represents 'an abbreviated translation'…which results in a fusion or a blurring vagueness. Next is displacement, which operates through censorship. This censorship operates via the substitution of something with only an unintelligible allusion to it (unlike waking associations) and secondly, by shifting the emphasis from that which is important to that which is tangential…Finally…the transformation of thoughts into visual images… via this process, the dream-work 'submits thoughts to a regressive treatment and undoes their development'; our thoughts originally arose from sensory images, and it is thence that they return.

To make these three components clearer, the experience of Mama Emma in the opening paragraph who sobs after mentioning the market, is quite applicable. The market seems to represent the totality of her experience: everything appears to have been made smaller or *condensed* into it. Market wares might not be the most explicit cause or facilitator of traumatic memory; however, it represents peripheral referencing of the latter. Regarding other displaced survivors of Boko Haram's violence in northeast Nigeria, it may serve as a literal representation of their agony, as in the case of one of the research participants whose foodstuffs were forcefully taken, and her house burnt by her neighbours turned Boko Haram terrorists. Food items or wares (like rice, beans) which were sold at the centre or cooked in the kitchen were a constant reminder

and representation of her 'past memory' in the present. An idea that Bond and Crap (2020:78) puts as "the past is performatively regenerated or relieved as if it were fully present". In doing so, it shatters the difference between past and present in such a manner that "the experience of trauma…is perpetually re-experienced in a painful, dissociated, traumatic present" (Edkins, 2003:39; Caruth 1995). Trauma, therefore, achieves a specific 'timelessness' and as Laub contends that the event of trauma persists into "the present and is present in every aspect" (Felman and Laub, 1992: 69).

Furthermore, trauma returns through the visual symbols of the market including the food items that were sold. This is akin to an idea which Craps (2010:54) corroborates as "the trauma returns in dreadful visual images …". In alluding to the market, it might seem in this sense that Mama Emma was sort of allowing herself to be distracted by that which has no immediate importance. It is thus that upsetting memories, which for survivors of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) display as flashbacks or imageries, manifest as such and not as thoughts - for it is this regression to a more primeval survival mode (like sobbing, crying), such as experienced in times of primitive (at the first instance of the traumatic incidence) trauma that is indeed referenced as 'unspeakable' horror because it precedes language (Tschudin, 2015:60). That is, some victims of terrorist horror are unable to communicate or explain what immediately happened to them as it exceeds their capacity of understanding. This corresponds to the inaccessibility of traumatic experience due to the absence of language because some of these victims are unable to describe their experience in words. They freeze or become numb. Some of them ultimately lack the language to express their traumatic experience.

Unravelling Psychological Trauma: The Interplay of individual experiences and Sociocultural Contexts

The idea of psychological trauma or more broadly PTSD as tapestries of individual experiences embedded in socio-cultural context were very evident in the interviews conducted with survivors at the centre. The psychological anthropologist, Lester (2013:754) highlights this further "a traumatic event is traumatic precisely because it sheers us off from our expected connections with others, from our perceived social supports, from our basic sense of safety". The point here is that experience of trauma and its associated PTSD has socio-cultural and religious contexts as well as imports for survivors. In the first place, the meanings ascribed to trauma relates to what Carter cites as "a cultural object whose function produces particular types of subjects" that are predisposed to the ecologies of Christian practices (2021:4). This view is consistent with the findings of Sociologist Philips (2022:1) wherein religion is approached as "a cultural resource that offers meaning-making tools through which people negotiate the meaning and memory of violence". Therefore, the understanding of psychological trauma and its resolution as well as gaining resilience goes beyond therapy management: This insight was embedded in the submission of Pastor Folorunsho:

> It was a tough job for us because before they came, we were dealing with the people that have been sexually abused as a child and abandoned children, the under privileged children, children from poor and broken home. We also now had to deal with people who suffered wars and killings. Nothing prepared us for dealing with this kind of situation but somewhere along the line, we had to deal with the situation. People had to come from different places like the doctors, psychologist and the likes were brought from the university… we've learned about trauma therapy and management and all that didn't work because the deep wounds in their soul was so terrible. So, we just had to stop these therapies…What we did was to go into practical demonstration of Christian love

that is in the bible and others, which is rooted in the love of God and our
neighbour and expressed in: caring for them (survivors) and doing the things
that they had not even have in their lives before the terrorists came.

In putting a cessation to therapies, Pastor Folorunsho spotlights the practical dimension of
Christian love in situating and attending to the cases of trauma. In doing so, he signified trauma
and its imports through the lenses of Christian Love (Cf. Van Raemdonck 2019). Other ways
included feeding the survivors with the Word of God. This view was emphasized by one of his
assistants, Pastor E:

The primary focus of the center is to renew their mind (in reference to the survivors) with the word
of God; the word of God brings complete healing to a traumatized mind plagued by violence of
Boko Haram. The psychologist makes use of the world (referring to mundane or material things),
but as ministers of the word (referring to herself and the management leadership), we use the
word of God to heal their mind and reclaim them for Christ. Therefore, perfect healing from trauma
is when they hear the word of God, they trust and practice it.By this, anthropologist Hollan
interprets the argument of Devereux: "traumatic reactions (or memories) are always relative to
the cultural context in which they emerge because the meanings and experience of the stressful
events that precipitate them are always filtered through cultural expectations, buffers, and
defenses" (Hollan, 2013:739). Drawing heavily from the Christian narratives disseminated by the
management of the Center, many survivors exhibit a nuanced awareness and dedication to
leveraging cultural resources to overcome trauma. Pastor E underscores the Center's utilization
of the 'word of God', particularly in the stories of individuals who have endured trauma, as a
strategy for managing traumatic memories. In doing so, she elucidates the nature of trauma and
strategies for coping with it. Conversely, she downplays the role of psychologists in favor of the
Theocentric narrative advanced by the Centre's pastors. Furthermore, our findings indicate how
cultural resources such as the singing of local songs, traditional dances, use of proverbs, retelling
of biblical stories through traditional protagonists, and emphasis on familial bonds, courage,
industriousness, endurance, and resilience contribute to our understanding of trauma constitution.

Harnessing Resilience through Attachment to God
The narratives of survivors within the Christian community illustrate how their connection or
attachment to God through prayer practices has not only reshaped conventional understandings
of attachment theory but also played a central role in fostering resilient behaviours. Many
survivors recounted enduring significant hardships such as hunger and torture during their
captivity under Boko Haram, as well as facing challenges upon escaping and resettling at the
Centre. For instance, Sarah, one of the survivors, reported turning to prayer as a coping
mechanism during moments of danger:

> (Looking up to the sky) God delivered us from their den of captivity when we
> called upon Him in difficult moments. The case is that they took us into the
> vehicle. They were happy that they have gotten new wives. So, they ate and got
> drunk. In the middle of the night, we attempted to escape, but we were all caught
> and beaten. My legs were pierced with a cutlass and blood flowed. This was to
> serve as a warning that no one should attempt to escape again. We were fed
> once a day and beaten regularly and forced to convert to Islam. Three days later,
> Nigerian warplanes were bombarding where the Boko Haram were hiding. There
> was confusion everywhere. Some of us including my mother ran away and hid
> in a rich man's house in the village. Boko Haram people knew him very well. I
> think God helped us and he did not take us back to Boko Haram. He gave us
> food and money…

Sarah's testimony illustrates how the classical psychological framework of attachment theory, as proposed by Bowlby (1969), becomes salient during moments of heightened tension exacerbated by the attacks of Boko Haram. According to Bowlby, infants seek protection from their caregivers when faced with life-threatening circumstances, and their sense of safety is often anchored in a parental figure, typically conceptualized as a father. Bowlby posited that children develop internal working models (IWMs) of themselves, and others based on the security or insecurity experienced in the parent-child bond (Reinert & Edwards, 2014:2). These early attachment patterns influence individuals' self-perception and interpersonal relationships throughout their lives.

Kirkpatrick (1992) and Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) suggested that attachment theory can elucidate the dynamics of religious practices among individuals who have a personal relationship with God. They observed that individuals who have secure attachments to their parents tend to exhibit a corresponding attachment to God. Similarly, Granqvist proposed that the child's later social learning is influenced by the early attachment security experienced with parents, shaping subsequent notions of God based on the individual's internal working models of self and others (quoted in Reinert & Edwards, 2014:2).

Moreover, additional survivors exemplified an intimate bond with God, resembling the way infants seek comfort from their caregivers in times of distress or threat (Bowlby, 1969). This intimate relationship is manifested in their acceptance of God's will and affirmation of God's deliverance as resilience practices to cope with the traumatic memories stemming from Boko Haram's violence. Consequently, they exhibit "courage and strength by enduring conditions of extreme deprivation and persevering against adversity" (Tiong, 2006:8). This suggests that the psychosocial impact of Boko Haram's activities, including loss of livelihoods and homes, deaths of loved ones, social rejection, shame, hunger, inadequate clothing and medical care, as well as shattered aspirations and dashed dreams, triggers or reinforces the attachment systems of the survivors. They turn to God at the International Christian Centre to regain their lost sense of security and repair fractured relationships in the face of traumatic memories of Boko Haram's violence and the challenges of daily life.

Again, the account of Aminu demonstrates attachment to God through prayers despite the sudden sundering of his everyday life's normality. By this, Aminu was able to find meaning in his suffering through praying to God. Therefore, the traumatic memories of Boko Haram violence became God's plan, which bestowed solace to him. Through God's plan, Aminu pictured himself within God's redemptive works of love and earthly trial. As Aminu will say:

> *Na every day I dey take talk to God. Na there I for take know say God dey test me for the suffer I suffer for Boko Haram people. So, when I pray, I come they see the plan of God for my life which is all good. So, I place all my trouble for God hand. As my matter dey God hand, na happiness go dey show for my face* (I talk to God daily. In my interaction with God, I come to realize that I was tested through the ordeals of Boko Haram. All my cares or worries are in God's hands. Mindful of this, my life becomes a reflection of happiness. It is through praying to God that I discover His plans for me).

In this context, prayer becomes what Marcel Maus refers to as a religious action meant to connect humans with the sacred being (Mauss 2003). In emphasizing this channel of communication brokered through payers, Aminu acquires what Bandak refers to as "techniques of use and comportment of the body" (Bandak, 2017:5). This implies that Aminu subjugates his body to the

disciplining roles of prayers aimed at the cultivation of a particular moral and spiritual self. Through praying and the repeated regulating of life in and via prayer, a religious self is nurtured and produced (El-Guindi 2008; Haeri 2013). From this, a docile body is formed which relates to and comprehends the purpose of God's will in one's life. Although critics will characterize the transformative personality of Aminu as 'psychological profiling', nonetheless, the meaningful function of prayers, which corresponds to coping or resilient practices has been reported in several research (Hardgrove, 2009; Eggerman and Panter-Brick, 2010).

"Acting out" vs. "Working through": Exploring Differing experiences of trauma and resilience.

> My father and my only brother were killed by Boko Haram (She broke down in tears) as we watched from our hiding spot on the farm… My mother cried uncontrollably as she heard her son called out to her for help as well as my father cut into pieces. She was overwhelmed and till now she has not come to terms with their death. She rarely talks and feels guilty all the time. She screams regularly at night. She has thought of taking her life sometimes. Our lives have changed as I feel sad and mourn the death of my father and brother. However, I have decided to focus more on my education and make my dead father happy in heaven…

In the analysis of responses to trauma, survivors like Patience and her mother exhibit varied and individualized approaches to understanding and adapting to the traumatic experience (Bauer, 2016). Our research findings demonstrate that Patience, her mother and indeed other survivors within the same traumatic context or event often manifest distinct reactions and employ diverse coping strategies. These coping mechanisms not only offer insights into the classical Freudian concept of repetitive phenomena (1926/1961) but also enhance comprehension by incorporating LaCapra's notion of *acting out* and *working through* as interconnected, non-binary approaches to engaging with traumatic experiences (LaCapra, 1998; 2001). Patience's mother responds to traumatic memories with symptoms such as silence, feelings of guilt, insomnia, and suicidal thoughts, which contrast with her daughter's coping mechanism. While Patience experiences sadness, she resolves to prioritize her education as a means of honouring her deceased father. In contrast, her mother remains mired in grief. These experiences are consistent with Freud's (1961) theory of dual kinds of trauma recurrence, in which Patience attempts to create a representational framework by reinforcing her ego, while her mother displays a disintegration of representation. Similarly, Sarah's mother response reflects a state of melancholia, characterized by an inability to move beyond past memories of Boko Haram violence. Melancholy, highlights the uncontrolled aspect of memory: "the traumatized self, locked in compulsive repetition, is possessed by the past, and remains narcissistically identified with the lost object" (LaCapra 2001:66). In this sense, Patience's mum mental health or wellbeing becomes affected. In other words, she exhibits what LaCapra (1998) terms *acting out*, wherein past trauma is repeatedly relived as if it were occurring in the present. This phenomenon echoes Caruth's insights (1995) regarding the disconnection between trauma and the event itself. Sarah's mother not only feels overwhelmed but also lacks the language to articulate her experiences of Boko Haram violence, echoing Caruth's (1996) notion of events that are not fully comprehended as they unfold.

On the contrary, Patience articulated that while the violence perpetrated by Boko Haram was distressing and devastating, she managed to survive. Despite the occasional resurgence of trauma, characterized by what Craps (2010:54) describes as "dreadful visual images," Patience approaches her present circumstances with a forward-looking perspective. Unlike her mother,

who appears to be perpetually entrapped in past trauma, Patience embraces the future with enthusiasm as a means of confronting her present challenges. By directing her focus towards the future, she endeavours to *work through* her current situation by differentiating between her recollections of past events and her present reality, thereby gaining critical distance from her trauma (LaCapra, 1998; 2001). In this process, she seeks to assimilate dissociated memories of the past into her current framework of meaning-making (Caruth, 1995). Through this process of working through, survivors, such as patience and other survivors, ultimately become resilient, thereby echoing a simultaneous process of adapting to "difficult and challenging life experiences" (Sossou et al. 2008: 367).

Furthermore, Patience underscores the significance of education in honouring her deceased father. She elaborates that interacting with friends who share similar traumatic experiences alleviates her mood and prevents feelings of loneliness, which could potentially lead to the re-enactment of past trauma. The positive impact of these social interactions for Patience and her peers includes a sense of belonging and a heightened commitment to shaping their future. This aligns with existing research emphasizing the beneficial role of social support networks in assisting trauma survivors (Kawachi & Berkman, 2001).

Through such responses, many traumatized victims of Boko Haram have developed and implemented resilient practices, utilizing coping mechanisms to integrate their past traumatic experiences into their present lives as a means of *working through* or crafting meaning and purpose.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The integration of Freudian psychoanalysis in elucidating the experience of trauma warrants exploration for its potential to unveil both universal vulnerability and culturally specific manifestations. This study endeavors to disengage Freud's theoretical framework from its Western-centric critique, particularly regarding his emphasis on repressed sexual desires, the unconscious, and latent dreams, among other aspects (Kleine, 1972; Krull 1987). By engaging with Freud's theories within a broader cultural context, this research aims to demonstrate that trauma and resilience are not only inherent to humanity at large but also intricately linked to cultural dynamics.

Drawing upon Passerini's assertion (2005:250-251) regarding the transformative potential of psychoanalysis, particularly Freudian theory, in transcending Western hegemony within psychology, this study underscores the importance of a relational and culturally sensitive approach to understanding trauma. By incorporating Freudian psychoanalytic concepts into the discourse, it seeks to pave the way for a decolonized framework for trauma theory. Such an approach strives to foster inclusivity and acknowledge the nuances of local contexts, as emphasized by scholars such as Kevers and Lucia (2013), Visser (2015), and Donn (2017).

An effective decolonized trauma theory necessitates a keen awareness of the cultural milieu shaping survivors' trajectories, including the role of religious practices in their experiences of survival and recovery. Insights gleaned from survivors' narratives which are consistent with the research findings such as those by Peres, Moreira-Almeida et al. (2007:348), underscore the significance of religious and spiritual beliefs in facilitating resilience post-trauma. The incorporation of spirituality, including prayer, emerges as a fundamental aspect of survivors' coping mechanisms and adaptation strategies (Visser, 2015). The belief system among survivors at the centre is intertwined with numerous Christian narratives and cultural elements. The dissemination of these narratives, emphasizing endurance and bravery, redirects focus from the

earthly realm to a heavenly perspective, where trauma is transmuted into a path glorifying the understanding of God's will and purpose. The survivors often find comprehension and alignment with God's purpose, including the traumatic memories of Boko Haram violence, through prayers (Robbins 2004; Cannell 2006). This aligns with the survivors' attachment systems activated by the impact of Boko Haram's activities, leading them to seek restoration of lost security and relationships by turning to God. In times of crises, trauma survivors communicate and navigate through their traumatic experiences by connecting with God, described as their "refuge and strength" (Psalm 46:1).

A critical concern arising from this research is the need to develop a nuanced language and framework for envisioning alternative modes of trauma recovery rooted in people's belief systems, particularly those on societal margins in the global south. Future research is expected, considering the pervasive influence of post-western ideology that may impede engagement with Christian religious and spiritual practices, such as prayers, eschatology, and reflections on suffering, in postcolonial trauma narratives. Despite these challenges, this study underscores the universality of human vulnerability. In doing so, it synthesizes classical psychoanalytic theory in close dialogue with a socio-cultural perspective.

Conclusion
The findings of this research were derived from in-depth interviews and informal discussions with survivors of Boko Haram, particularly on young women and children, along with the managers of the Christian Centre. The study's conclusions highlight that applying Freudian psychoanalysis from a socio-cultural perspective can enhance our comprehension of trauma and resilience within the survivor experiences. In this reinterpretation, the traditional understanding of attachment theory is reconceptualized, emphasizing the attachment to God. The study underscores processes like *acting out* and *working through* as essential tools through which survivors construct their resilient practices.

Drawing from the research findings, the study concluded that the experience of trauma is culturally specific, with individuals appropriating it differently and manifesting varying degrees of resilient strategies. While some individuals at the centre continue to grapple with trauma, either by *acting out* or constantly reliving traumatic memories, others have managed to *work through* their experiences and develop resilient practices, often through their relationship with God, including prayer.

This understanding is envisioned to serve as a guide for fostering the development of resilient practices crucial for the recovery of young women and children affected by terrorism in Nigeria. The premise underlying this endeavor is that the well-being of individuals contributes significantly to robust growth and national development.

Limitations and Recommendations
It's noteworthy to mention that all participants involved in the interviews identified as Christians. There might be a potential influence on their perspectives due to their adherence to the Christian faith, viewpoint critics have labelled as 'Christianization process'. The inclusion of psychological tests for participants could have added depth to our research findings from multiple perspectives, and it is recommended for future researchers to integrate such assessments into their analyses of the Centre's survivors.

Despite the coordinator of the Centre advocating against psychological tests in favour of a Christian framework, it is crucial to broaden the perspective beyond Christianity to encompass

survivors with diverse religious affiliations. Similarly, all interviewees were engaged within the confines of the Christian Centre, sometimes under the observation of the Centre's management. It is plausible that respondents might yield different outcomes when situated outside the Centre's environment and without the oversight of management roles.

In conclusion, future research should complement this investigation by endorsing restitution, social justice, and compensation for victims of Boko Haram as practices that could contribute to the development of resilience. Also, attention should be directed to secular forms of coping, rather than solely religious ones.

Author's notes. This paper is a portion of a broader PhD study at the International Christian Center in Nigeria that examines the lived experiences of Boko Haram survivors.

Endnotes
1. All the names in this paper are pseudo names to maintain anonymities. However, the head of the Centre requested that his real name can be used in this research.
2. Freud's theory holds good for some of the dreams, especially those expressed by the research participants. However, a disclaimer must be stated that there is not enough ground to prove that all dreams can be explained adequately through Freud's theory. This is so because not all dreams are results of repressed sexual desires.

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