

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing of Survivors of Fulani
Herdsman Attack in St. Ignatius Mission Mbalom Makurdi Diocese Benue State,
Nigeria**

By

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11173628>

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to establish the relationship between Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing of Survivors of Fulani Herdsman Attacks in St. Ignatius Mission Mbalom Makurdi Diocese Benue State, Nigeria. The study's objectives were, to examine the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder, to assess the levels of psycho-spiritual wellbeing, to determine the relationship between post-traumatic stress disorder and psycho-spiritual wellbeing and to propose possible interventions for coping with post-traumatic stress disorder on the Christians faithful of St. Ignatius Mission Ayar-Mbalon, Makurdi Diocese Benue State, Nigeria. The study was grounded on the Theory of Rational Emotional Behavioral Therapy and adopted an embedded mixed research design. The target population was 1494 of the parishioners of St. Ignatius Mission Mbalon Makurdi Diocese Benue State Nigeria from where a sample of 316 which was arrived at using Yamane formula. The researcher used both questionnaires and interview guides to collect data, using descriptive and inferential data analysis and content analysis as its tool. The study revealed that the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among the Christian faithful in St. Ignatius Mission Ayar-Mbalon, Makurdi Diocese, Benue State, Nigeria, is mild though not negligible, with a mean score of 46.25, majority of the respondents (82%) exhibited a high level of Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing. Additionally, the negative Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = -0.477$) between PTSD and Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing indicates that individuals have traces of PTSD symptoms who tend to have poorer psycho-Spiritual wellbeing. Although a little bit of the portion of the population exhibits extremely the presence of PTSD and its little traces on psycho-Spiritual wellbeing necessitates targeted interventions to address the needs of individuals experiencing psychological distress.

Key words: Conflicts between herders and the farmers, Nigeria, Conflict between pastoralists and farmers, Nigeria, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing, Survivors of Fulani herdsman attacks.

Citations:

Uvihi, V.O., Asatsa, S., & Egunjobi, J.P. (2024). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing of Survivors of Fulani Herdsman Attack in St. Ignatius Mission Mbalom Makurdi Diocese Benue State, Nigeria. *Journal of Africana Articles*, 2(9), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11173628>

INTRODUCTION

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can be defined as a real disorder that develops when a person has experienced or witnessed a scary, shocking, terrifying, or dangerous event(s) affecting the psycho-spiritual wellbeing of a person (Okamoto, 2023). These stressful or traumatic events usually involve a situation where someone's life has been threatened or severe injuries had occurred. It is an abnormal reaction to an extremely stressful event that can be intense, prolonged, and sometimes delayed from onset which the individual is a survivor or an eyewitness of the event (Okamoto, 2023). It is characterized by recurrent disturbing flashbacks to a traumatic event, avoidance or numbing of memories of the event and a state of hyper-arousal (Vujanovic et al., 2023).

World Health Organization opined that each year over 1.6 million people worldwide lose their lives to violence (Johnson & Thompson, 2008). Additionally, WHO estimated that in the situations of armed conflicts throughout the world, 10% of the people who experience traumatic events will have serious mental health problems, and another 10% will develop behaviors that will hinder their ability to function effectively (Funmilayo, 2020). About two-third of European population have experienced at least one traumatic event in their life, between 1% and 3% of European population have developed PTSD suffering from symptoms during the past years; this correspond to about 7.7 million people (Nemeroff et al., 2018).

Reisman (2019) conducted a research in United States that estimated PTSD prevalence rates among returning service members to vary widely across wars and eras. In one major study of 60,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, 13.5% of deployed and no deployed veterans screened positive to PTSD (Fazal, 2024). This war in Iran or Afghanistan, some studies have shown the rate to be as high as 20% to 30% of 500,000 U.S. troops who served in these wars over the past 13 years have been diagnosed with PTSD (Peterson, 2024). The development of this traumatic experience is a life-threatening event such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, herders' attacks, serious accidents, physical or sexual assault in adult or childhood (Ayima, 2018). Most survivors of trauma return to normal given a little time, however, some will have stress reactions that do not go away on their own, or may even get worse over time (Kip et al., 2014). According to Ceri and Nasiroglu (2018) Turkey is noted as being the world's leading country in hosting refugees, a study conducted to examine the prevalence of emotional and behavioral problems associated risk factors among Syrian refugee minors in Turkey, the finding war shown a high prevalence rate of severe traumatic experiences among those who survived the Syrian. The Herders conflicts with farmers are fueled by the

herdsmen's quest for grazing field, in which many African countries such as Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Congo, have had their fair share of the same mayhem, Nigeria remaining the worst-hit (Chansaenroj *et al.*, 2017).

Edeh(2023) in his research further reveals that prevalence rates of attacks relating to PTSD seem high among Survivors of herdsmen. For example, studies have shown that the prevalence of violence-related PTSD, six (6) to eight (8) years after population massacres, in Algeria was 37% (de Jong *et al.*, 2001). Eight (8) years after the Rwandan genocide, 25% of those surveyed met symptom criteria for PTSD (Pham& Longman, 2004); an approximate prevalence rate of 44 % in Liberia (Ford, 2012) and an estimated 6% in South Africa (Atwoli *et al.*, 2013). These instances indicated that even after years of violent conflict people are still left with many mental injuries one amongst which is PTSD. (De Jong *et al.*, 2011) examined Somali women exposed to the violence attacks which had lasted over a decade in Somalia and the results indicate very significant symptoms of PTSD as a result of the fighting. In South Africa PTSD has been measured in a population-based mental health epidemiological survey, the South African Stress and Health Study suggested a lifetime and 12-month PTSD prevalence of 2.3 and 0.7% respectively while the risk of PTSD was found to be greatest among those who had lost a loved one (Sekoni *et al.*, 2021).

Usunobun *et al.*, (2021) conducted a study in Kenya on the Influence of Posttraumatic Growth on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder among Refugees in Nairobi County, Kenya and there was high prevalence of PTSD. In Ghana, most of the attacks on farmers involve Fulani herdsmen and settled farming communities. As a result, violent conflicts between farmers' communities and Fulani herdsmen have become widespread; increasingly the spate of these violent clashes and reprisal actions between farmers and Fulani herdsmen in many parts of Ghana has led to destruction of properties, loss of human lives and the displacement of people (Abbass, 2014).

Over 60,000 deaths have been recorded in recent years and well above a million other people have been displaced due to the violent crisis taking place between the Fulani herdsmen and the farmers' communities in Nigeria (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2018). Survivors of this attack are now at the greatest risk of experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depressive symptoms which are considered among the most serious and commonly reported negative outcomes in trauma-focused research (Domino *et al.* 2020; McGuire *et al.*, 2018). Nigeria has been enmeshed with frequent hit by Fulani herdsmen attacks in which there has been human loss; devastation of the environment; destruction of property; psychological trauma of survivors and tarnishing of their image at the international level (Mohammed & Baba, 2018).

Iduma (2021) had a critical look at the Tiv farmers and Fulani herdsmen attacks which started between 2013 and 2014 in Benue State and still are ongoing. The conflict had affected many local governments in the state including Gwer-East Local Government Areas in particular reference to the Mbalom massacre which has displaced more than 100,000 people leaving them homeless and making many shift to Internally Displaced Camps, some lost their lives while others are maimed with PTSD (Edeh2023). Consequently, the farmer-herder crisis or attack has the potential to undermine community relationships across Nigerian (Okoro, 2018). This is because the community members are now seeing herders as enemies due to the fact that the crisis has taken the dimension of the acquisition of modern weapons and communication devices and even less trust to one another because of psychological distress, an individual

experiencing this emotionally, physically, spiritually faces a life-threatening experience(s) that affects the mental, physical, social, and/or psycho- spiritual well-being (Trajkov, 2023).

Gleig (2010) opined that the term psycho-spiritual wellbeing has entered psychology and religious discourse as a loose designation for the integration of the psychological and the spiritual. As a broad term it can denote a variety of positions between psychology and spirituality. It is commonly used to describe a wide range of therapeutic systems which embrace a spiritual dimension of the human being as fundamental to psychic health and full human development and which utilize both psychological and spiritual methods (such as meditation, yoga, dream-work, breath work) in a holistic, integrated approach which bring about inner growth and healing (2010).

Psycho-spiritual wellbeing appears to capture human wellness better than just the psychological wellbeing, it is conceived as a holistic way of human being, that seems to capture psychological and spiritual wellbeing in an integrative manner, it also takes into cognizance the physical, social and other forms of wellbeing (Egunjobi, 2024). It is about a person's experiences and the effects these experiences have on the person, in other words, it is how your life experiences affect your psychological thoughts, feelings and behavioral wellbeing, your spiritual life (connection to self, others, God, having the sense of purpose and meaning in life) (Egunjobi, 2024). Psycho-spiritual wellbeing is a state of being that should not be fragmented. It is a state of being and not states of being. Hence, examining or determining the level of a person's psycho-spiritual health requires a holistic examination of those factors that can predict one's psycho-spiritual health or wellbeing (Egunjobi et al., 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

PTSD affects everyone regardless of their age, gender, social, racial, ethnic, or sexual orientation (Levin, & Liu, 2024). Rasmussen et al., (2021) conducted a study named "The National Health Study for a New Generation of U.S." It was carried out on 60,000 veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, as well as non-deployed veterans who served during the same timeframe, were the target group for the veterans' health survey. In order to assist medical professionals in screening veterans for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), researchers circulated a survey to veterans and conducted a veteran PTSD survey. The findings show that Veterans, throughout the last 15 years, been over 500,000 veterans with PTSD diagnoses; up to 60,000 of these veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The total estimates findings show that between 20% and 30% of veterans who served in Afghanistan and Iraq are currently experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to the report, both Freedom Veterans and non-deployed Veterans of War currently suffer from PTSD. A study conducted by Kurapov et al., (2023) to examine the effects of the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine on mental health six months after the Russian invasion of that country. A total of 703 participants (mean age $M = 32.1$, $SD = 12.1$), 77.9% of whom were female, met the study's eligibility requirements. The participants were recruited six months after the full-scale invasion using an online questionnaire created using a snowball procedure, which included sections on socio demographic data.

Teshomeet al., (2023) also carried out a research on Post-traumatic stress disorder and associated factors among adult war survivors in Northwest Ethiopia: A community-based

cross-sectional study was conducted with 812 participants were chosen using multi-stage sampling process a face to face interview, a post-traumatic stress disorder checklist (PCL-5) evaluate PTSD. The associated and other demographic and psychosocial characteristics were investigated bivariate and multivariate binary logistic regression analysis. The findings of this study reported that the prevalence of PTSD was high. Being female having a previous history of chronic medical illness, depressive symptoms, and anxiety symptoms, history of a family member or friend was injured or killed poor social support, high perceived stress, physical assault and being in a war fighting situation were statistically associated with PTSD.

Tutlam (2018) conducted a study to examine the effects of war trauma on South Sudanese citizens, with 750 participants overall and a sample size of 250 using a cross-sectional interview research design. According to findings of the research, the prevalence of anxiety, depression, and PTSD is as high as 26%, 59%, and 48%, respectively. (Sharma, 2022) also carried out some research among South Sudanese women who had resettled in the United States, with a target population of 400 women, a sample size of 150, and cross-sectional interviews. It was discovered that there was a similarly high level of illness burden. Their offspring, who have not been directly affected by war trauma, also exhibit a comparatively elevated incidence of emotional and behavioral issues. In other words, the vast majority of South Sudanese have been impacted.

Usunobun et al. (2021) carried out a study in Nairobi, Kenya, examining the impact of posttraumatic growth on posttraumatic stress disorder in refugees living in Nairobi County. Yamane's formula was used to establish the sample size of 133 participants Only Nairobi County, which is home to the majority of Kenya's urban refugees, was included in this analysis (UNHCR, 2020). A straight forward random sample technique for the quantitative strand and a convenient/purposeful sampling technique for the qualitative strand, Standardized questionnaires were utilized in the collection of quantitative data; the 20-item Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist (PCL-5) and the 21-item Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI). The findings show that there is presence of PTSD among the refugees and that ongoing psychosocial and psychological support, together with coping mechanisms, might lessen the effects of posttraumatic growth.

Egbert (2018) carried out a study on the challenge of herders-farmer's crisis and its implications in Nigeria, to check the prevalence of PTSD. A survey study of infinite population was used that since the return to democracy in 1999, Nigeria has been grappling with diverse security challenges, chief among them are insurgency, election violence, kidnapping and most recently, the herder-farmer attacks among others. The findings show that there was prevalence of PTSD among the people

Ganzevoort (2020) conducted a study on "Transcending the Suffering in Cancer: Impact of a Spiritual Life Review Intervention on Spiritual Re-Evaluation, Spiritual Growth, and Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing" in the Netherlands. 57 cancer patients took part in a mixed-methods were used to gather quantitative data at baseline, three, and nine months after the intervention (44 participants completed the study up to nine months after the intervention). The linear mixed model analysis was used to evaluate changes over time. Nine months after the intervention, 33 individuals participated in semi-structured interviews to gather qualitative data, which were then coded using a two-step procedure. The findings show that, informed consent was obtained from 57 cancer survivors who participated in the baseline questionnaire (T0); 56 of them found

purpose in their suffering. Nearly half of the individuals (11/23) who were experiencing ontic despair attempted to get over it by finding purpose in their suffering.

A study conducted by Kamlesh and Shilpa's (2021) on enhancing college students' well-being was the topic of research in India. With a target population of 308, the study included 112 Indian undergraduate students as the sample size and the study used an edutainment strategy and evaluated pre-post differences in positive (overall well-being, mental wellness, and motivational speakers). Its effectiveness was investigated using a web-based. In all three investigations, there was a noteworthy improvement observed in four well-being markers, including mental well-being. Overall, the findings seem encouraging and could inspire more research.

Kiplagat's (2019) carried out a study on the relationship between psycho-spiritual wellbeing and happiness among consecrated religious women in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study's target population was 238 people, and all of them were used as sample size, with a correlation design was utilized in study. The findings of the study showed that there is a substantial correlation between psychological wellbeing and enhanced spiritual wellbeing, as well as happiness. Consequently, the study draws the conclusion that each consecrated religious woman's happiness and spiritual wellness are positively impacted by greater psychological wellbeing. This suggests that in order to increase spiritual wellbeing, issues pertaining to psychological health must be improved, so that spiritual wellbeing is heightened. Consecrated religious women's lives are very important in terms of their spiritual wellbeing.

The relationship between psycho-spiritual well-being and post-traumatic stress disorder has been the subject of extensive research studies. Wood et al. (2018) conducted a study on the relationship between spiritual well-being and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in the United States Air Force, by Examining the relationship between existential and spiritual health and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in RPA and intelligence personnel, the personnel who participate in combat operations from remote locations are involved in remote killing, which elicited significant emotional responses. Three hundred and five U.S. Air Force RPA and intelligence professionals were the target population. They completed the PTSD Checklist-Military Version and the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS). The relationship between the SWBS score and PTSD symptoms was investigated using correlation analysis. The scores from the PTSD Checklist-Military Version and the SWBS correlated negatively (Pearson correlation coefficient = -0.49, $p < 0.0001$). Findings show a reduced symptom of PTSD were linked to higher levels of spiritual and existential well-being. Additionally, the sample's spiritual and existential scores were similar to certain SWBS norms, indicating that distant warfare operators would not have particularly high levels of existential anguish. As a result, on a PTSD symptom scale, lower endorsement of mental health symptoms was linked to greater spiritual and existential well-being.

Another study was conducted by (Radstaak et al., 2022) on examining well-being in posttraumatic stress disorder treatment in Netherlands: with a total target population of 662 participants filled out all questionnaires a sample size of 318 completed at least one questionnaire at T1. The instruments used in the research were an explorative study design and questionnaires. The study was approved by an independent medical ethics committee for research in the Netherlands (METiGG; NL 46248.044.13). Participants were patients with PTSD who followed treatment at a Dutch Psycho-trauma Center for outpatient care between March 2013 and October 2015. The findings of the study established that well-being increased

among patients with PTSD who received a care-as-usual treatment and that the strongest improvements emerged for emotional and psychological well-being, hence it discovers that well-being was an important predictor in treatment efficiency.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Ramadan et al (2021) on the association between spirituality and the development of PTSD symptoms among Syrian refugee adolescents in Jordanian schools, a sample size of 418 Syrian adolescent students (age range between 12–16 years) from Jordanian schools in the northern part of the country were enrolled in the study after informing on study context and objectives. The study used questionnaire included sample demographics, smoking status, PTSD checklist – Civilian Version (PCL-C), two spirituality-targeting questions, and trauma and loss history. 'Almost half of participants (N = 196) showed moderate PTSD symptoms while around 30% (N = 124) had a severe level of PTSD symptoms. On the other hand, 3 out of four students perceived themselves as highly spiritual.

Another study conducted by Weinberg et al. (2023) to examine the association between personal characteristics and public stigma toward posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) survivors in Israeli. Two hundred and ninety (N = 290) Israeli participants completed a survey that included demographic, self-esteem, spirituality, well-being, and stigma questionnaires. Descriptive statistics, correlations, linear regressions, and structural-equation modeling were conducted in order to examine the study model and hypotheses. To investigate the study model and hypotheses, descriptive statistics, correlations, linear regressions, and structural equation modeling were used.

The findings of the study show that the higher levels of self-esteem are linked to greater levels of belief in the following: that mental health professionals can treat PTSD survivors effectively; that survivors can recover and continue to have normal relationships; that they are not likely to ignore their appearance; and that they can feel at ease and at ease with other survivors of PTSD. Well-being is associated with a belief that if survivors are careless with their hygiene they will feel anxious around PTSD survivors; hence spirituality is linked to confidence in the ability of experts to treat.

Ramadan et al., (2021) Conducted a study on the Civil war in Syria began in 2011 and escalated over years resulting in one of the largest humanitarian crises since the Second World War II, after being informed about the study's background and goals, 418 Syrian adolescents (aged 12 to 16) from Jordanian schools in the country's north were selected as study participants. While explanatory study research methods were used. Sample demographics, smoking status, the Civilian Version (PCL-C) of the PTSD checklist, two items focusing on spirituality, and a history of trauma and loss were all included in the study questionnaire.

Findings show that about 30% of participants (N = 124) exhibited severe PTSD symptoms, whereas nearly half of participants (N = 196) experienced moderate PTSD symptoms. Conversely, three out of every four students thought of themselves as extremely spiritual. After examining the connection between spirituality and the emergence of PTSD symptoms in Syrian refugee teenagers attending Jordanian schools, the study found a favorable correlation between believing in God and God's thanks.

Beatrice et al.'s (2020) study on Psychological and spiritual wellbeing of family caregivers of children with cancer at a teaching hospital in Ghana, 13 participants (n = 13) ranging in age from 30 to 70 comprised the sample size for the psychological and spiritual wellness of family caregivers of children with cancer at a teaching hospital in Ghana. Participants who met the inclusion criteria were recruited using a purposive sample technique and interviewed one-on-

one using a semi-structured interview guide in a qualitative exploratory descriptive design. These participants lived in different parts of Ghana and had been providing care for at least seven (7) months. Findings show that providing care has positive impact on family caregivers' psychological and spiritual wellbeing. As psychological experiences surfaced, four subthemes arose: helplessness, blame, distress and grief, and dread and anxiety. Spiritual well-being centered on faith, exercise and inner fortitude. As for spiritual wellbeing, three subthemes surfaced: religious rituals, hope, and significance in life.

Ujah (2021) conducted a study on the Relationship Between Communal Violence and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder among the Agatu People Of Benue State, Nigeria: 16,000 survivors of the violence from four (4) Agatu villages—Aila, Egba, Enungba, and Oshigbodu - were the target population of a psycho-spiritual investigation. This study used a descriptive research design and applied a quantitative research technique, which entails the process of gathering, evaluating, and interpreting data. A purposeful random sample procedure was utilized to recruit 388 participants. The findings showed a substantial correlation ($p \leq .001$) between Agatu's PTSD and communal violence. It also showed that Agatu had a 51.4% prevalence rate of PTSD and that effective coping mechanisms were sufficient to lessen the symptoms. Thus, cognitive therapy grounded in mindfulness and the cultivation of personal resilience.

In American societies, PTSD is a common experience for both adults and children. While individuals experience holistic healing and gain a personal understanding of their biopsychosocio-spiritual nature through the merging of contemporary psychotherapy and spiritual direction approaches with cultural sensitivity, this is known as psycho-spiritual therapy (Egunjobi 2018). In order for the client to experience psycho-spiritual wellness and for the individual psycho-spiritual therapist to become psycho-spiritual competent, this integration must occur (Egunjobi 2018). The concepts of coping are the ideas and actions used to deal with both internal and external unwellness (Algorani & Gupta, 2023).

A study was therefore conducted (Kendra, 2020) in USA Flight crew Response to Aircraft System Failures, Malfunctions, and Systems Not Functioning as Expected Social support refers to the psychological and material resources provided by a social network to help individuals cope with stress, with 500 target population and 235 as the sample size. This is a qualitative exploratory descriptive design. The findings suggested that, it could be lending a hand with various everyday chores when someone is sick or providing financial support when they are in need, or it could be delivering counsel to a friend who is going through a trying time. Giving support, compassion, and understanding to family members who are in need can be included into social, religious, family, partnership, or community activities, these help people to find meaning and hope in life.

Another study by Whitehead Bergeman, (2020) on the Daily Religious Coping Buffers, the Stress-Affect Relationship and Benefits Overall Metabolic Health in Older Adults. Psycho Religious Spiritual in Notre Dame France, participants: 267 older individuals (mean age = 72; 63% female) using survey research design on participants who lived in the community were part of the Later Life Cohort of the Notre Dame Study of Health & Well-being. The impacts of daily perceived stress, daily religious coping, and their relationship on daily negative effect were evaluated using daily diary data (56 days). the longitudinal Notre Dame Study of Health and Well-Being (NDHWB), which examines the mechanisms and determinants of stress and wellbeing in middle-aged and older adults.

A recent study conducted by Shoshoni (2020) to evaluate the effects of a positive-psychology intervention on youths exposed for a lengthy period to war-related stressful events as a result of the violent Israeli–Palestinian conflict. An infinite population comprising 2,228 teenagers from four southern Israeli schools was used in the study. using a quasi-experimental repeated measures design. Adolescents exposed to low or high levels of political strife-related life experiences had pre- to post-test alterations in the intervention and control conditions evaluated. The results showed that the intervention and control groups' changes over time differed significantly.

Riaz et al. (2023) carried out a study in Bangladesh to determine the post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) and coping strategies among health professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. With a target population of 1394 health professionals (596 doctors, 713 nurses, and 85 medical technicians), a sample size of 877 was used; a cross-sectional study was carried out across the nation on the participants, and data were gathered via in-person interviews with a semi-structured questionnaire. SPSS software was used for analysis. The study's findings show that the majority of participants used spiritual practices to help them deal with their issues.

Moodley and Hove (2023) conducted a survey study in south Africa on Pastoral Care and Mental Health in Post-Pandemic South Africa: A Narrative Review Exploring New Ways to Serve Those in Our Care of infinite population, they find out that the population underscores the fact that the religious beliefs and practices we learned over time as children and have become habitual come to the fore in the face of traumatic experiences. This implies that the religious beliefs/prayer is an important strategy that could be very useful in helping people who are passing through any kind of traumatic experiences and particularly the victims of Fulani herder's attacks.

Aliche and Onyishi (2020) conducted a study on Mindfulness and wellbeing in older adults' survivors of herdsmen attack as a coping intervention mediating on positive effect in Nigeria; were drawn from a community in southeast Nigeria, with a sample size of older adult survivors of Fulani herdsmen attack ($N = 308$, mean age = 59.72 years) $N = 308$ older adult survivors (mean age = 59.72 years) of the Fulani herders attack were selected from a village in southeast Nigeria. Participants completed self-report measures of mindfulness, positive reappraisal, life satisfaction, perceived stress and depression. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis showed that Mindfulness and positive appraisal were independently associated with wellbeing better life satisfaction, lower perceive distress and fewer depressive symptoms, yet this association was fully mediated by positive appraisal. The findings highlight the potential benefits of mindfulness meditation intervention programs for the most vulnerable, as it can foster positive emotional outcomes and overall wellness as people age.

Peter and Tade (2022) conducted a study on farming as intervention coping strategies between farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria employed by internally displaced farming communities. With data collected from 23 purposively selected survivor of farmer-herder conflict in Nasarawa State. Using exploratory design and qualitative data collection tools, on those who were displaced and were either living in internally displaced persons camps or with friends/family. The study findings indicated that participants used farming activities and their friends and family as a coping mechanism when they were victimized. Thus, creating a watch group, moving to a safer location, changing jobs, and putting their faith in God were all examples of coping mechanisms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used embedded mixed method design. The study was located at St. Ignatius Mission Mbalon, Makurdi Diocese Benue State, Nigeria in one of the parishes that is mostly affected by the gruesome killings of the parishioners by Fulani Herdsmen where as a diocese we lost two of our priests and 17 parishioners in a day and thus, leaving those who survived in fear and psychological distress. The target population was 1494 from where a sample of 316 participants were selected for quantitative data while 10 key informants were interviewed. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules.

FINDINGS

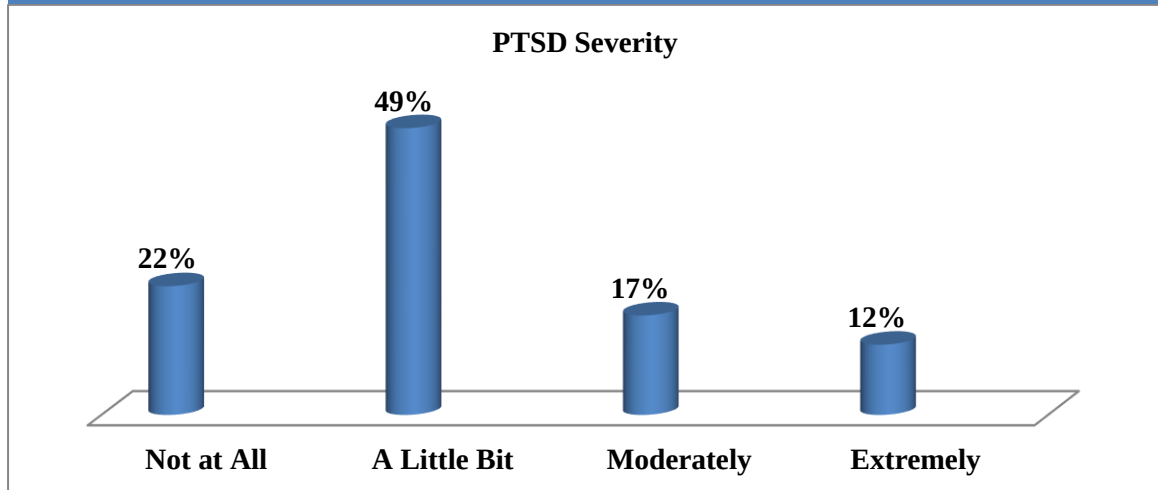
Prevalence of Post- Traumatic Stress Disorder on the Catholic Christian faithful Prevalence of PTSD

PTSD Sum

N	287
	37
Mean	46.2544
Std. Deviation	13.75160
Skewness	1.864

The study established that the mean was 46.2544 and the Standard Deviation scores was 13.75160. The mean score of 46.2544 suggests that, an average Christian faithful in St. Ignatius Mission Ayar-Mbalon, Makurdi Diocese, Benue State, Nigeria, experienced a moderate level of PTSD symptoms. This suggests that PTSD symptoms are present in people who have experienced trauma. Even while the majority of people suffer milder symptoms, this does not make it negligible and it emphasizes the value of individualized interventions to meet each person's needs for wellness.

Severity of PTSD among Parishioners



Even though 22% of respondents attested that they were unaffected at all with PTSD, the study demonstrates that there were few traces of PTSD among 78% of respondents related to the herdsmen attacks. This suggests that many of the survivors are still experiencing PTSD though mild psychological distress. For example, Participant 3 voiced his disapproval of this matter:

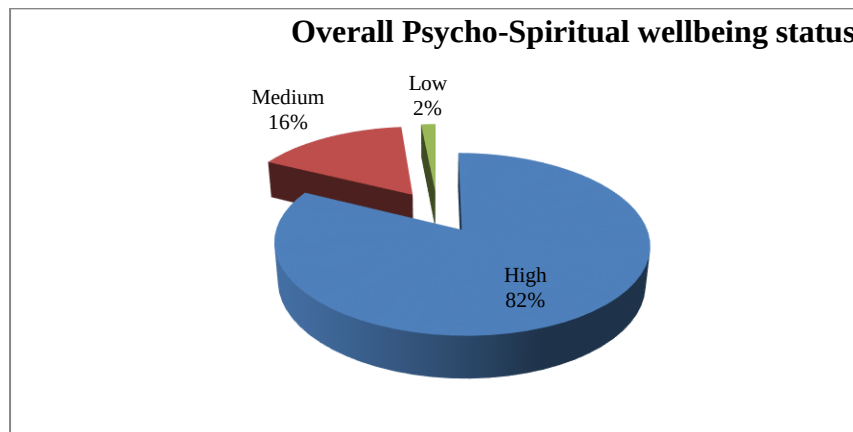
This incidence is a pitiful and a horrified situation for me, the reason is because whenever I think of this gruesome killing, I feel terribly bad, killing priests, catechist and other Christian faithful this is terrible, I feel extremely hurt and depressed each time I think of the killing. The killing at Mbalom is one of the most horrific experiences I have ever had. Every time I think about it, I get scared, angry, and occasionally even despondent. I don't know what would have happened to me if weren't for God, who has been supporting me; when I reflect back on that incident, it feels like it is happening again (Interview, 29th February, 2024).

Similarly, Participant 5 also shared his concerns on this:

My experience of this incidence has been so painful and distressing, this is because after this incidence, this is seven years now but when I remember it is as flesh in my mind as if it is happening now, so my experience has not been good. I feel like life is not worth living, if a priest can be killed on the altar then how much more a common lay person like me will be treated, so I feel like life is not worth living at all, even sleeping in my room I am afraid (Interview, 3rd March, 2024).

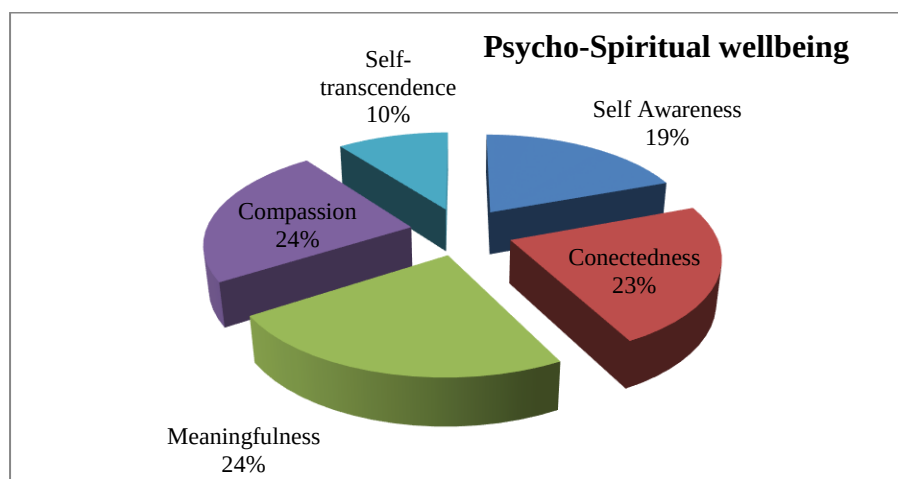
Kurapov et al.'s study from 2023 corroborated this claim, asserted that people who experience similar incidents suffer from PTSD symptoms such as anxiety, depression, stress, low resilience, and subjective satisfaction with living conditions, all of which participants 3 and 5 above have shared. Teshome et al. (2023) study also supported this assertion that, the prevalence of PTSD is seen among those who witnessed their family members or friend injured or killed during war fighting, physical assault and other forms of violence, it affects their social lives, may also have high perceived stress, depression, which are associated with PTSD. This can also be seen of the traumatic experiences among survivors of Fulani herder's attacks, there by bringing about psychological distress (Moodley & Hove, 2023).

Overall Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing Status



The psycho-Spiritual wellbeing findings show that 82% of the respondents had a high level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing followed by 16% that had minor levels of psycho-Spiritual wellbeing and 2% had low psycho-Spiritual wellbeing. This implies that the majority of the respondents in the sample have a high level of self –awareness, connectedness to self and their community, found meaning in life, are compassion to self and others and mild in self-motivation, hence the high level of psycho-Spiritual wellbeing, while a smaller percentage have mild or low psycho-Spiritual wellbeing.

Categories of Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing



The sub-categories of the psycho-Spiritual wellbeing scored is as follows: meaningfulness and compassion scored 24% each, followed by connectedness that scored 23%, then self-awareness which scored 19% and lastly self-transcendence which scored 10%. The relatively equal scores across meaningfulness, compassion, and connectedness suggest that individuals in the sample tend to value these aspects of psycho-Spiritual wellbeing. The balanced distribution may indicate a holistic approach to mental health, and with strong resilience ability to overcome

intrusion with individuals emphasizing both internal (meaningfulness, self-awareness) and external (connectedness, compassion) aspects of wellbeing.

The sub-categories of the psycho-Spiritual wellbeing scored meaningfulness 24% indicate that individuals in the sample tend to value this aspect of psycho-Spiritual wellbeing. Being able to find fulfilment, meaning and purpose, while maintaining balance with self and with others, which can be attested in the participant4; who find meaning in spirituality and religious activities.

To find meaning in life, I have hope and trust in God, my spiritual lives such as celebration of the Holy Mass, praying the Rosary and other prayers. What has also kept me going is when I see my parishioners' being steady in their faith despite their struggles amidst killings and destructions, I feel encouraged and strengthened, and also, I am lucky, I have been receiving counseling services from my counselor as well as spiritual direction from my spiritual director. In turn, I also organize counseling services for my parishioners. (Interview, 29th February 2024).

The same view is shared by participant 6:

When this incidence incurred, prayer has been one of the strong coping strategies for me, we have been coming together monthly for the prayer we have organized to always pray; like the Rosary, Novena, meditation and other prayers, calling on our Mother Mary to help us, so that this may not happen again. I have joined Catholic Youth Organization, and with some of the social and spiritual activities in the youth like cultural dance, road walk, farming, have served as sources of strengthen to me, others include; teaching of doctrine, ; community unity, and also different groups have come to visit us to encourage us, these have strengthened us more and more (Interview, 10th March, 2024).

Radstaak et al. (2022) study attested to the fact that well-being increased among patients with PTSD who received care as treatment and coping interventions like religious and social activities such as prayer, meditation, dancing, exercise etc, that the strongest improvements emerged for emotional and psychological distress when these coping interventions are used, hence, the study discovered that spiritual, care and social activities served as important treatment, especially for those with PTSD, as can be seen with the view shared by participants 4 and 6; who through the use of these religious and social care interventions were able to become resilience against PTSD following the herders attacks.

Relationship between PTSD and Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing

		PTSD Sum	Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing Sum
PTSD Sum	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	287	267
Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing Sum		-.477**	1
	Pearson Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between PTSD and psycho-Spiritual well-being scores is -0.477 . The negative sign ($-$) indicates an inverse relationship between the two variables. This shows strong negative correlation, with a strong connection between the two variables, but as one goes up whenever the one goes down. This means that as psycho-spiritual wellbeing scores increase (indicating high levels of psycho-Spiritual well-being), PTSD scores decrease (indicating low levels of PTSD symptoms) (Kenddra & Cherry, 2023). The magnitude of -0.477 suggests strong negative correlation between the variables. This indicates that individual with high level of psycho-Spiritual wellbeing, have mild or low level of PTSD symptoms and have positive attitude to life. However, the low PTSD level should not be neglected. Thus, this underscores the importance of addressing symptoms of those with low PTSD by promoting psycho-Spiritual wellbeing among individuals affected by traumatic events with coping interventions aim at reducing PTSD symptoms which may also lead to wellness. The strong negative correlation highlights the interconnectedness of PTSD symptoms and psycho-Spiritual wellbeing. Comprehensive interventions should address both aspects of mental health to promote overall resilience and recovery among individuals affected by trauma (Calhoun et al., 2022)

Possible interventions for coping with post- traumatic stress disorder on the Christians faithful of St. Ignatius Mission.

The study was conducted purely from the interviews to establish how the participants were coping with the PTSD occasioned by the herdsmen's attack. The interviews were transcribed, analyzed and the findings classified into interventions coping strategies, psycho-spiritual wellbeing supports, community unity and individual resiliency factors.

Coping Interventions Strategies

From the interviews, it is evident that the participants scored high (82%) in psycho-Spiritual wellbeing and score very low (12%) PTSD, which is an indication that the people are in good psychological wellbeing, after the stressors with strong resilience from coping interventions strategies they are able to resist PTSD. However, there are mild traces of psychological distress which should not be neglected but need immediate attention. Hence, various interventions coping strategies were identified:

Spirituality Intervention Coping Strategy

Spirituality, which was helping them to find meaning in life, for instance, Participant 1, reported to have been using various strategies to cope with the situation as follows:

I have been doing farm work and other charity work to my parishioners. I also organize prayers, teachings in the schools- primary and secondary, organizing children for prayers and social events. To find meaning in life, I hope and trust in God. What has kept me going also is the fact that seeing my parishioners' being steady in their faith despite their struggles amidst killings and destructions I feel encouraged and strengthen. I am also lucky; I have been receiving counseling services from my counselor as well as spiritual direction from my spiritual director. In turn, I also organize counseling services for my parishioners. (Interview, 29th February 2024).

Similar sentiments were expressed by Participant 2 who had the following to say:

My relationship with my parishioners is very cordial though not all of them. Staying or being around them and not thinking about the issue reduces the pains and being with them make me feel better to feel their pains, sometimes when I am less busy I visit them in their homes and sometimes invite them to the parish house, and reason together how to help live and look forward to a better being. In this way my spiritual activities in a way I will say is increasing but then I used to have more engagement with my parishioners in the out stations, but now that many outstations have been close down, we are now based in the central church, for church activities, like the exposition of the blessings sacraments, rosary, now that we are in the Lenten season we say the station of the cross so we usually come together to pray. Some of my coping strategies involve working in the farm.

(Interview, 29th February 2024).

Bergeman (2020) agreed that using different coping interventions strategies help reduce PTSD such as Religious activities – prayer, charity work and community-dwelling were used to assess the effects of daily perceived stress, daily religious coping, and their interaction on daily negative effect, hence religiosity and spirituality are useful coping intervention in times of stress, particularly the most disenfranchised in society.

Community Unity Intervention Coping Strategy

Another coping strategy involved mobilizing youth to unite the community. This seems to have succeeded to ease the tension to some extent. Participant 4 noted the following:

After the incidence the community, especially my community we organized the youth development associations which helped us to talk about the unity in the church and in the community and how we can arrest the situation, and these had helped me a lot to forget the situation, because in discussing this it helps us ease our minds, help to focus and get us going. (Interview, 29th February 2024).

Radstaaket al. (2022) shared in this view who opined that well-being and healing increased among patients with PTSD who received care and support as treatment by their members in the community they tend to heal faster, because strong wellness improvements emerged first from emotional and psychological well-being, just as participant: 4, a survivor of Fulani herder's attacks Mbalom.

Interviews revealed several interventions utilized by participants. Spirituality emerged as a prominent coping mechanism, with others such as farming, charity work, organizing prayers, and engaging with parishioners, counseling and spiritual direction, served as sources of support, individuals finding solace and meaning in their faith and life. Additionally, fostering community unity, particularly through mobilizing youth groups, was noted as a strategy to alleviate tension and promote healing to those with mild effects of PTSD. Overall, these interventions highlight the importance of faith, community engagement, and meaningful activities in coping with the low or mild traumatic aftermath of the attacks.

DISCUSSIONS

The scores of PTSD among the Survivor of the attack is generally low or mild, it shows that minority of 12% being affected, or are having extremely cases; though 78% have at least traces of PTSD that are low or mild, that one in six persons of those who have a little bit and moderate

traces of PTSD, are one in eight of the total population affected or have low trace of PTSD, especially when you compare 82% of those with high psycho-spiritual wellbeing. Even with the participants who described experience of the Fulani herdsmen attack as a nightmare, traumatic and challenging, they might still possess strong resilience from different coping strategies to resist these post-traumatic stress disorder such as, prayers, spirituality, farming, community unity or togetherness

The study established that 82% of the respondents had a high level of psycho-Spiritual wellbeing. Therefore, a significant portion of the population has a positive outlook on life, feel satisfied, and experience a sense of fulfillment and purpose in life. They also have greater resilience to stress, adversity, and challenges, enabling them to cope effectively with life's ups and downs. However, the presence of individuals with moderate or low psycho-Spiritual wellbeing highlights the importance of targeted interventions and support systems to address the needs of those experiencing psychological distress.

The Pearson Correlation (r) between PTSD and Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing scored -0.477. This indicated that the two variables are going in the opposite directions. In other words, when variable A is increasing, variable B will be decreasing. Thus, in this case, the dependent variable (PSWB) increased with a high score of 82%, and independent variable (PTSD) have decreased in scores of 12%. Hence, this indicates that individuals with more PSWB tend to live healthy and meaningful lives and individuals experiencing low PTSD symptoms are likely to have poorer psycho-Spiritual wellbeing, however, with the interviews several interventions utilized by participants. Spirituality emerged as a prominent coping mechanism, with individuals finding solace and meaning in life and being helped by other, activities such as farming, charity work, organizing prayers, and engaging with parishioners, counseling and spiritual direction served sources of support. Additionally, fostering community unity, particularly through mobilizing youth groups, was noted as a strategy to alleviate tension and promote healing. Overall, these interventions highlight the importance of faith, community engagement, and meaningful activities in coping with the traumatic aftermath of the attacks.

The study identified several coping and interventions utilized by Christian faithful of St. Ignatius Mission Ayar-Mbalon in Benue State, Nigeria, following the attacks by Fulani herdsmen. Spirituality, fostering unity of purpose in the community living, mobilizing youth groups for beneficial activities, farming, charity work, prayers, engaging with parishioners, therapeutic –counseling, spiritual direction served as sources of support system.

CONCLUSION

The high scores of psycho-Spiritual wellbeing of 82% has helped the people to stand against PTSD by events of attack and majority find meaning in life, which shows that minority of 12% being affected, or having extremely cases; though 78% have at least little traces of PTSD, that is, one in six persons of those who have a little bit traces of PTSD, are one in eight of the total population affected or have little trace of PTSD and especially when you compare 82% of those with high psycho-spiritual wellbeing. Even with the participants who described experience of the Fulani herdsmen attack as a nightmare, traumatic and challenging, might still possessed strong resilience from different coping strategies to resist these post-traumatic stress disorder such as, prayers, spirituality, farming, community unity or togetherness .however, as mild as these PTSD may appear to be, it is not negligible, hence there is every need to provide support system to individuals who are still suffering from psychological

distress with coping strategies like psycho-education, spiritual direction and more therapeutic services to bring about their wellness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are recommended:

- I. The Diocesan Bishop, the Parish priest, other Priests and the parish council to help enhance spiritual support. Given the significant and the importance role of spirituality in coping strategies, it is essential to continue providing avenues for spiritual guidance and support. This can include organizing regular prayer sessions, retreats, and spiritual counseling services to help individuals find solace and meaning in their faith: To make available spiritual directors, to ensure accessibility and availability of professional counseling services within the community. This may involve training local counselors or collaborating with external organizations to provide ongoing support.
- II. Health Practitioners (workers), therapists and the youth organization of the Parish; to help establish accessible and culturally sensitive psychological support services within the community to cater for individuals experiencing PTSD symptoms and general psychological distress. This may include among other things, organizing workshops, seminars, or support groups: to help stress management, resilience-building techniques to create more awareness and understanding of PTSD and mental health issues among community members through educational campaigns and outreach programs.
- III. The Diocesan Bishop, parish priest, Health practitioners, therapists and a committee to promote holistic wellbeing by emphasizing the importance of holistic wellbeing, including physical, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions within the community. They may also encourage practices such as regular exercise, healthy lifestyle choices, mindfulness, and spiritual practices to promote overall wellbeing and resilience and to help integrate mental health services into faith-based settings by collaborating with religious leaders and faith-based organizations to integrate mental health services into religious practices and settings. This could involve incorporating mental health awareness sessions, counseling services, and support groups into church activities and programs.

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