Chapter 8

School Shootings and Therapeutic Interventions for Traumatized Victims

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts an encapsulation of school shooting as a strand of mass violence with the purpose of presenting a perceived effective approach that could be therapeutically adopted for handling traumatized victims of school shooting incidents, particularly traumatized students. School violence involving firearms and high fatalities have been trending in many parts of the world. Pathetically, most of the students who are victims of school shootings receive inadequate or no therapeutic interventions that could help them to recover from the emotional trauma that usually accompany school violence. Students with trauma symptoms experience dysfunctional adaptation, leading to impairment of daily functionality, distortions in peer interactivity, and disruptive self-expressivity. This study leans on family system theory and elucidates how the application of this theory could help the traumatized to regain themselves psychosocially in order to maintain adaptation to function properly in the school or community.

INTRODUCTION

School shooting cases have become rampant in recent decades (Fetters, 2018). High fatalities associated with school shootings have been met with grave consequences, including emotional and/or mental health challenges. In the West, in particular in the U.S., school shootings are reported frequently, even among adolescents (Keneally, 2019). World Review Population (2021) defines "school shooting" as "…An attack at an educational institution, such as a primary school, secondary school, or university, involving the use of firearms." Thus, a school shooting takes place on school grounds, and one or more firearm is used in carrying out the attack. In the present study, we adopt this operational definition of school shooting, and this definition guides our understanding of the concept "school shooting" throughout this chapter. School shootings as a form of school violence are typically accompanied by fatalities and/or injuries of various degrees. This is in line with the position of Crews and Crews (2021), who maintain that incidents of school violence in most cases lead to injury of at least an individual; and, in 75% of such cases, there is at least one fatality. School shootings are worrisome due to their increased prevalence; as noted by Hagerty (2018), within the first five months of 2018, *The Washington Post* confirmed 17 incidents of school shootings, the highest record since 1999. Dixon (2005) notes that school shootings in the United States date back to 1764, when the Pontiac Rebellion School Massacre took place, resulting in only 3 survivors out of 13 children in the school. In developing countries like Nigeria, cases of school shootings are gaining press attention, though usually among students of higher institutions of learning because violent behaviors are more prevalent among them than among students in lower schools. Specifically, mass shootings in institutions of higher education in Nigeria are common among secret cult members who belong to secret societies or organizations. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 1979), in its 1979 constitution section 35(4) defines a secret society as "... a society or association, not being solely cultural or religious body, that uses secret signs, oats, rites or symbols.(a) Whose meeting or activities are held in secret; and (b) Whose members are under oath, obligation or other threat to promote the interest of its members or to aid one another under circumstances without regard to merit, fair-play or justice". Thus, secret cult members are those who belong to societies whose activities are secret and could be characterized by rituals and mass attack in order to protect certain clandestine interests unknown to the general public. About 5,000 lecturers and students were reportedly killed in 2003 as a result of attacks of cultists across Nigerian universities (Okwu, 2006), as activities of cult groups continued to gain prominence on campuses. However, school shooting by bandits and insurgents in order to subdue students for the purpose of kidnapping or carrying out acts of terrorism have equally emerged in Nigeria (Global Coalition to protectect education

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