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## **MODIFYING DEVIANT POLITICAL BEHAVIOURS THROUGH COUNSELLING**

**Yahaya, Lasiele Alabi; Jekayinfa;  
A. A. Yusuf; Jawondo and A. O. Oniye.**

### **Abstract**

*Politics in Nigeria since independence has witnessed a lot of challenges. At different occasions these challenges led to military interventions, civil war, political violence, annulment of election and massive loss of lives and properties. The thrust of this paper therefore is to examine common deviant political behaviour that promote political instability in Nigeria and identify ways by which counselling can be employed to modify undesirable political behaviour. The paper stressed that positive political behaviour can be achieved through the use of relevant counseling therapeutic techniques and the provision of counselling services to both the leaders and the led.*

### **Introduction**

Politics can be described as a practical activity, which involves taking decisions, implementing decisions, selecting or electing the people who govern, determining how political leaders behave and the relationship between the political leaders and the governed. The political history of Nigeria is full of challenges. Specifically, the post-colonial period witnessed several challenges, which shook the foundation of Nigeria as a federation. Some of these challenges include the Action Group crisis, 1962; Federal Election Crisis, 1964; Western Nigeria election crisis, 1965; General Election crisis, 1983, June 12 crisis, 1993 and the popular Anambra saga, 2004. These crises, which led to loss of live and properties and gave the nation a negative image, could be attributed to deviant political behaviours among Nigerians.

Political behaviours according to Stanyer (1984) can be referred to as elite behaviours, mass behaviours, voting behaviours, committee behaviours etc. Roberts and Edwards (1991) defined political behaviours as an area of study within political science, which concerns human behaviours within socio-political context. It focuses on the individual person as a voter, a leader and a party member rather than the group, the political system, the institution or the structure.



Specifically, political behaviours are human actions or inaction regarding security and usage of power in public life.

The political behaviours of Nigerians are the major determinants of success or failure of democracy in Nigeria and the continue existence of Nigeria as a corporate entity. Consequently, this paper examines deviant political behaviours in Nigeria, causes, effects and ways of modifying such undesirable behaviours through the provision of professional counselling services.

### **Types of deviant political behaviours**

A deviant behaviours is an act, which does not conform to the societal norm. It is a behaviour that is undesirable and unacceptable. Such behaviour endangers peace, harmony and progress of a group or community. Some of the common deviant political behaviours in Nigeria are:

- a) **Multiple Registration and Voting:** This is an act by which a person registers and votes more than a time for a single candidate in an election.
- b) **Impersonation:** It is a situation in which a person pretends to be another person and claims the identity of another person especially during the period of election.
- c) **Forgery:** A criminal act of copying electoral materials (e.g. voters' cards) in order to assist a political contestant or a party to have an undue political advantage.
- d) **Violence:** This involves the use of political thugs to disrupt elections or to destroy lives and properties.
- e) **Public Assault/Battery:** This is manifested in form of public fight and exchange of words or blows by political office holders especially the legislators.
- f) **Blackmail:** The use of threat or intimidation to force a person to engage unwillingly in an act (e.g. withdrawal from elections).
- g) **Unwillingness to Vacate Political Office:** It is the insistence of political office holders to remain in power in deviance to constitutional provisions and whether or not they are still acceptable to the electorates.
- h) **Purchase of Vote:** Outright buying of votes or even voters' cards during elections. Settlement of electorates or provision of gratification in forms of money, food and clothes.
- i) **Connivance with and Settlement of Electoral Official:** Collaborating with electoral officials in order to manipulate or falsify electoral figures.
- j) **Use of Power of Incumbency and the State Machinery:** The use of governmental resources (e.g. police, army, judiciary etc) to suppress opposition and win election at all cost.



- k) **Poor handling of Victory/Failure at Polls:** Attacking electoral opponents or destroying their properties after electoral victory or failure.
- i) **Lackadaisical Attitudes:** These are manifested in forms of non-participation in elections, lateness to polling stations and acts of discouraging other from participating in elections or politics.
- m) **Insensitivity to the Needs of Electorate:** Un-fulfilment of electoral promises and non-provision of the needs of electorate after electoral victory.
- n) **Annulment of Election:** This involves cancellation of election due to personal or group interest.

### **Causes of Deviant Political Behaviours**

Human behaviours do not just occur there are usually some causal factors. Some of the identified causes of deviant political behaviours in Nigeria are poverty, ignorance, ethnicity, religious bigotry, illiteracy, selfish political interest, military interventions, political inexperience and regionalism (Idowu, 2004). Bakare (1983) attributed deviant behaviours to lack of guiding values, lack of patriotism, acrimony, interpersonal conflicts, self-seeking leadership, corruption, disregard for human life and colossal inefficiency, Idowu (2004) also observed that Nigeria has been plagued by severe, protracted and escalating political crises since the late sixties. According to him, these crises are manifested in the failures of successive governments to promote development and equity, guarantee political stability, honesty and accountability, enhance national security and promote human rights and observance of the rule of law. Consequently, criminality, political thuggery, sycophancy and intolerance became the order of the day.

### **Effects of Deviant Political Behaviours**

Deviant political behaviours are associated with negative consequences. These include loss of lives and properties, maiming or sustenance of injuries, political instability, economic depression, unemployment, increase in crime rate, brain, poor international image, military interventions and disenchantment. For instance, the annulment of June, 1993 election in Nigeria led to political instability, economic depression and loss of lives and properties between 1993 and 1999.

Idowu (2004) observed that deviant political behaviours have caused decay and dereliction within the infrastructures of government and the society in physical, social and human terms. According to him, deviant political behaviours are responsible for the instability of successive governments in Nigeria. He stressed that political instability lead to inefficiency and corruption. In summary, deviant political behaviours are anti-thesis to political development and national progress.



### **Counselling Intervention**

Counselling is an indispensable part of education. Abdulkareem (1990) defined education as “the process of acquiring skills, attitudes, abilities values, competences and generally, the acceptable behaviours of a society to enable the individual lives successfully and contribute meaningfully to the development of the society” (Ps). Similarly, counselling is a relationship between a professionally trained competent counselor and a client or a group of clients with a view of assisting the clients to gain greater self-understanding; improve their decision-making and adjustment skills in order to achieve developmental growth (Idowu, 2004). Odediran (2004) noted that counselling is an encompassing service rendered to an individual or group of individuals to enable them face issues in their day-to-day living and to handle issues that can make or mar the political life of the nation.

Counselling is for all irrespective of status, age, religion, ethnic group or rate. Recent development (e.g. consultation of professional counselors by political leaders) in the democratic nations such as the United States of America, have consistently justify counselling, a service that is capable of assisting political leaders and the followers to “think right” and act right” in order to effect national progress and development. The relevance of counselling to modification of human political behaviours cannot be overstressed noting the fact that political theories, principles and practice can only be effective if people incorporate them in their behaviours. Therefore, for the purpose of this presentation, two counselling approaches viz: Behavioural Counselling Technique (BCT) and Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) are considered relevant. The choice of these two approaches was based on the fact that they do not require elaborate use of equipment and they are relevant to traditional counselling approaches.

### **Behavioural Counselling Technique (BCT)**

Behavioural counselling is a process of assisting clients to learn to solve interpersonal, emotional and decision problems using psychological principles as propounded by Pavlov, Skinner, Wolpe, Krumboltz and Thoreson (Oladele, 1987). The behaviourists view behaviours as a set of learned responses, experiences or stimuli. Therefore, behavioural counselling involves a systematic use of a variety of procedures designed specifically to change human behaviours in terms of mutually established goals between a client and a counsellor. The procedures employed involve a variety of techniques drawn from psychological and counselling principles. Counselling in this approach involves re-education, re-learning and counter-learning. Krumboltz and Thoreson (1996), identified six main procedures of assisting clients using behavioural counselling technique. These are:

- i) **Shaping:** It is the use of rein-forcers and timing of their presentation in



order to produce positive behaviours e.g. providing rewards to clients at intervals whenever positive behaviours are displayed.

- ii) **Imitation/Modeling:** This involves acquisition of new mode of behaviours through exposure of clients to models who possess and exhibit the desired behaviours. e.g. exposure of clients to leadership traits of great leaders.
- iii) **Cognitive Learning:** It is a learning process through which clients are instructed on appropriate behaviours by counselors decision-making strategies.
- iv) **Emotional Learning:** It involves substitution of undesirable emotional reactions (e.g. arson) with pleasant emotional reaction (e.g. forgiveness) using psychological principles.
- v) **Assertive Training:** Teaching the clients ways of seeking their rights without injuring others' feelings. That is learning the proper way of expressing emotions without being anxious or aggressive.
- vi) **Aversion Therapy:** It is process of pairing noxious or unpleasant event or activity (fine) with an undesirable behaviour (e.g. smoking)

### **Rational Emotive Therapy (RET)**

This counselling approach is based on the theory that human beings get disturbed and engage in deviant behaviours mainly because of their irrational beliefs, attitudes, values and philosophies (Ellis, 1973). Thus, a client is disturbed not by an event but his/her judgement of the event (e.g. beliefs). According to Oladele (1989), some of the most effective and efficient means of assisting clients to handle their emotional problems are teaching and demonstration. RET, a therapeutic approach was developed by Albert Ellis who propounded the "ABCs" paradigm. 'A' refers to an external activity or event to which a person is subjected; 'B' refers to the clients irrational belief while 'C' refers to the feelings or behaviours that result from 'B'. Thus 'B' (self-talk or verbalization or belief) rather than 'A' is the cause of 'C'. The responsibility of professional counsellors is to assist clients to change their irrational beliefs, which led to their involvement in deviant behaviours to rational beliefs. This can be achieved through the following steps.

- i) Assist clients to realize that their negative behaviours largely result from distorted perception and illogical thinking.
- ii) Show the clients how they are causing and maintaining negative or deviant behaviours.
- iii) Demonstrate the illogicality in the clients' thoughts.
- iv) Teach clients how to rethink, challenge and contradict irrational internalized thought and become more logical and efficient.
- v) Assign homework to the clients in forms of reading texts on Rational



Emotional Therapy and educate clients on the importance of positive behaviours (Ellis, 1973).

## Conclusion

The two counselling approaches are considered relevant because they are both suitable and relevant to the situations in Nigeria. If professional counselors employ the two approaches, Nigerians would have the opportunity to acquire knowledge of the set of values necessary for national survival and development. Nigerians would also learnt to live together in harmony and avoid deviant political behaviours.

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