Reframing Attachment: Coping with Trauma through God Attachment among Boko Haram Survivors at the International Christian Centre, Edo- State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The spread of terrorist activities by Boko Haram, a Nigerian insurgent organization, has resulted in serious security and humanitarian challenges. This phenomenon has significantly impacted the population of Nigeria's northeast region, leading to internal displacement and prompting various responses, including experiencing trauma and the pursuit of recovery through religious practices. This research examines the relationship between religious activities observed at the Christian Centre during fieldwork and their importance for psychological recovery. This study uses a phenomenological technique, namely the analysis of multiple case studies, to investigate religious-based coping methods deployed by Boko Haram survivors, notably young women and children, in dealing with traumatic memories. By holding onto attachment to God as a religious-based coping approach, this study advances a sociocultural reframing of classical attachment theory. This perspective inevitably shapes the processes of navigating trauma and recovery, emphasizing the role of attachment to God.

Keywords: International Christian Centre, Attachment theory, Attachment to God, Trauma, Recovery of Boko Haram's survivors.

INTRODUCTION

This study promotes an integrated approach to trauma recovery by incorporating religious practices, specifically the attachment to God, within a socio-cultural framework. The research focuses on the International Christian Centre, a religious-based institution supporting young women and children who have experienced violence from Boko Haram in Nigeria's northeast region (Iweze, 2022; Magezi & Manda, 2016). Although research on trauma and attachment practices has emerged in recent decades (Kirkpatrick, 1992; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990), there remains a paucity of studies exploring the intersection of these concepts within the Nigerian context and their implications for trauma recovery among Boko Haram survivors (Maltby & Hall, 2012).

This gap in research necessitates grounding the discussion within foundational theories of attachment, including recent literature on attachment, specifically attachment to God. For instance, at the conception of his theory, John Bowlby (1980, 1982) sought to "update psychoanalytic object-relations theory with contemporary biology and ethology," thereby establishing the theoretical framework that would later evolve into attachment theory (Maltby & Hall, 2012, p. 302). Bowlby asserts that "what is believed to be essential for mental health is that the infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother-substitute) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment" (Bowlby, 1982, p. xxvii). Although Bowlby's emphasis on the importance of early contact in shaping personality was initially dismissed by the psychoanalytic community (Holmes, 1993), his ideas laid the foundation for understanding how attachment relationships influence psychological well-being.

Bowlby's foundational work on attachment theory was further advanced by Mary Ainsworth and her colleagues, who introduced the classification of attachment styles into secure and insecure types through their groundbreaking research (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1979). By the mid-1980s, the once distinct divide between attachment theory and psychoanalysis began to narrow, as clinicians and researchers increasingly recognized the utility of attachment theory in understanding relational dynamics and mental health. This

convergence led to the emergence of a clinically oriented attachment theory, integrating insights from both disciplines to inform therapeutic practices and deepen our understanding of human development and psychopathology.

This was in line with Bowlby's (1953) research, which found that a few negative life situations or traumatic experiences could affect attachment firmness. These included parent death, parental divorce, foster care, a parent's or children's chronic and serious illness, single parenting, mental health issues in the parents, substance abuse, and child or sexual abuse. These findings have been extended in further research. Schore (2001) linked attachment insecurity to early relational trauma, which disrupts right-brain development and mood control. Similarly, negative experiences might hinder reflective functioning, which is essential to attachment security, as noted by Fonagy and Target (1997). These assertions were supported by meta-analytic research by Van IJzendoorn and Bakermans-Kranenburg (1996), which demonstrated attachment disturbances in a variety of groups. The significant influence of such traumas on psychological health was also highlighted by Herman (1992), and Cassidy and Shaver (2008).

In the face of these challenges, caregivers play a pivotal role in mitigating the effects of trauma and fostering secure attachment. They operate as bastions of support through which the child navigates the world as well as a safe sanctuary to which they may resort in situations of peril through practices such as 'attunement' and dyadic 'regulation of affect' (Tronick, 2007; Fosha, 2001). Infants are more likely to form a stable attachment bond in dyadic relationships where this occurs. Insecure attachment types (anxious and avoid) emerge when caregivers are unable to provide constant attunement. In cases when caregivers are both horrifying and the only source of relief from the assault of terror, no systematized response to trauma can be devised (Kirkpatrick, 1999; 1992).

Consequently, the insecure or "the disorganized attachment style, characterized by dissociation and the inability to develop an organized strategy for managing the attachment relationship, has been significantly related to traumatic experiences, particularly traumatic experiences involving caregivers" (Maltby & Hall, 2012, p. 303). Since the publication of Hazan and Shaver (1987), attachment theory has changed from a focus on child and mother relationships to a focus on adult relationships as well as traumatic incidents or mental diseases (Fonagy 2001; Sroufe 2005). Adult attachment has evolved in recent years (Fraley, Garner & Shaver, 2000) and has come to characterize research in personality and social psychology, as well as social cognition (Stein, Jacobs, Ferguson, Allen, & Fonagy, 1998). Granqvist (2002) refers to Bowlby's (1969) observation on the phrase "attachment relationship" in his study. Herein, Bowlby proposed that attachment relationships include four conditions: "proximity maintenance, safe haven, secure base, and separation distress" (Bayramoglu et al., 2018, p. 205). Bowlby incorporated a fifth component into his design, requiring "the attachment figure to be stronger and wiser compared to the person attached to that figure" (ibid). People who have secure attachment connections perform better in social, physical, and emotional domains than those who have insecure attachment relationships. People who have greater social relationships with others have fewer physical and mental health issues (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1996).

In addition to the dynamics of relationships (Simpson & Rholes, 1998), attachment theory provides a solid basis for integrating religious growth and views of God (Kirkpatrick, 1992). The concept that God acts psychologically as an attachment figure for most people (Kirkpatrick 1992, 1999), as well as a stable basis for believers (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 2008), is critical to the application of attachment theory to religion. The notion of God as an attachment figure underpins many religious traditions, including Christianity (Bradshaw et al., 2010). People in these traditions perceive God as a safe sanctuary in times of severe distress and a safe area to focus on while out of harm's way (Kirkpatrick, 1999; Collins & Feeney, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 1999). As a result, Kirkpatrick and Shaver (2008) concluded that caring, conversion, and prayer are characteristics that might be included in 'attachment' and, by extension, the figure of God. There is a plethora of literature that depicts God as an attachment figure (Bayramoglu et al., 2018).

In line with past studies, individuals turn to God for aid during difficult or traumatic circumstances (Pargament et al., 1988; Granqvist, 2002). Some studies have sought to quantify attachment types in the context of human-God relationships. Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1992) created a categorical self-report measure based on Hazan and Shaver's (1987) parallel assessment of adult romantic attachment. Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1992) discovered in their community sample that people who reported a secure attachment to God reported much greater life

fulfilment and much less worries, depression, and physical ailment than people who reported an anxious attachment to God; their findings paralleled exactly those found for the measure of individual differences.

Recent studies have highlighted a significant correlation between traumatic stress and attachment, particularly attachment to God (Reinert & Edwards, 2014). This relationship suggests that individuals who experience trauma may turn to religious or spiritual frameworks as a means of coping and finding stability. The symbolic bond formed with God or a religious figure often serves as a compensatory attachment, particularly when human relationships are perceived as inadequate or unreliable. This attachment is not merely an abstract concept but is enacted and reinforced through tangible practices, such as participation in rituals, prayer, pilgrimage to sacred spaces, and engagement with religious texts (Williams & Watts, 2014; Ellison et al., 2014; Counted & Watts, 2017). These activities, while deeply rooted in religious expression, provide practical mechanisms for emotional regulation and resilience in the face of adversity.

Building on this, the emotional regulation facilitated by attachment to God has profound implications for mental health and recovery. Counted and Watts (2017) highlight that such attachments offer individuals a framework for interpreting their suffering and deriving meaning from it—an essential process in trauma recovery. Through the integration of traumatic experiences within a spiritual or religious narrative, individuals can reframe their pain as part of a broader journey, fostering a sense of purpose and hope. For instance, Njus and Scharmer (2020), using an online sample of college students, highlighted the positive impact of secure attachment to God on overall well-being. Their findings indicated that individuals who reported a strong, secure attachment to God exhibited higher levels of well-being compared to atheists and agnostics. This underscores the potential psychological benefits of perceiving a stable and supportive relationship with a divine figure, suggesting that secure attachment to God may serve as a buffer against stressors and challenges often faced during college years.

Expanding on this theme, Upenieks, Bounds, Melton, Glanzer, and Schnitker (2024) investigated the psychological well-being of student-athletes, a group uniquely positioned at the intersection of high performance and stress. Their study revealed that secure attachment to God was significantly associated with fewer mental health symptoms, such as anxiety and depression, indicating the potential for secure divine attachment to function as a protective factor against the mental health risks prevalent among student-athletes. Conversely, avoidant and anxious attachment to God were linked to an increase in mental health challenges, suggesting that insecure forms of attachment to God may exacerbate vulnerability to psychological distress.

An important aspect of Upenieks et al.'s (2024) findings is the mediating role of contingent self-worth, particularly when self-worth is dependent on acceptance from others. This highlights the complex interplay between interpersonal relationships, self-perception, and spiritual attachment. For individuals with a secure attachment to God, self-worth may be less contingent on external validation, thereby fostering greater psychological resilience. In contrast, those with avoidant or anxious attachment to God may rely more heavily on external sources of validation, which can lead to increased susceptibility to mental health challenges when such validation is lacking or inconsistent.

While acknowledging the usefulness of attachment categories in framing the relationship between God and humans as a foundational framework for our analysis, this study advances the fluidity and adaptability of human attachment systems (Chidozie, Mandolessi & Devlieger, 2024; Bayramoglu et al., 2018). That is, it introduces a socio-cultural dimension to the application of attachment theory. In taking this approach, this research reevaluates and, by extension, addresses a significant gap in the existing body of literature. It underscores the significance of a socio-cultural context in shaping the process of trauma recovery among Boko Haram's survivors within the framework of attachment to God.

Goal of the study

This research investigates how religious-based coping mechanisms, namely attachment to God, help Boko Haram survivors, especially young women and children, navigate their trauma and embark on their recovery journeys. This interdisciplinary approach, which provides a comprehensive understanding of trauma recovery in a faith-based setting, integrates attachment theoretical principles within the socio-cultural context of attachment to God. The study was guided by these research questions: How does attachment to God among Boko Haram

survivors redefine the classical understanding of attachment theory? What are its implications (of attachment to God) for psychological trauma and recovery among survivors of Boko Haram violence?

METHOD

Selecting Research Participants:

The participants selected for this study were specifically limited to include internally displaced persons (IDPs), coordinators, and caregivers at the Christian Centre. The process of selecting research participants involved three distinct steps. First, I engaged in discussions with the coordinators of the Christian Centre, introducing them to the research questions, aims, and the overall purpose of the study, focusing on the impacts of violence and the recovery practices of the survivors.

This initial step in participant selection was influenced by the research focus, leading me to choose the administrators of the Christian Centre as the primary entry point for the study. This approach concurs with the guidance offered by Ritchie and Lewis (2003) in their edited work, Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers. According to their contention, the criteria for selecting research participants should be dependent on the specific research questions or themes under investigation. Subsequently, the coordinators located participants who were likely willing to participate in the research. The remaining participants were recruited by referrals from those who had already participated in the initial snowball sample, and additional referrals were obtained through the coordinators of the Centre.

In essence, the selection of research participants was based on purposive sampling and referrals from individuals with direct experience of the subject matter. With the support of the Centre's management, I specifically chose participants who were not only members of the community but had been directly affected by Boko Haram's violence and had reconfigured or reinterpreted their traumas through a Christian framework. The rationale for this selection was to obtain detailed insights into the intersection of faith, trauma, and resilience. These lived experiences offered valuable perspectives on how Christian practices shape recovery processes, making these participants essential for the study.

Research approach:

The research, spanning from December 2018 to 2021 at the International Christian Centre, unfolded in multiple phases. Employing a qualitative research design anchored on multiple case studies, both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data encompassed insights obtained through in-depth interviews with the centre's administrator and his assistants, and survivors, particularly children and young women. The utilization of multiple case studies aimed to enrich participants' comprehension of the events, allowing their perspectives to be phenomenologically integrated into the research (Yin, 1993). Conversely, secondary data drew from literature on rehabilitation, the anthropology of religion (with specific reference to Christianity), psycho-social anthropology, refugee/displacement, trauma. The choice of a qualitative phenomenological approach, revolving around multiple case studies, aligned with Snape and Spencer's assertion (2003, p. 2) that the methods employed in data gathering reflect a blend of philosophy, research objectives, audiences, funders, and participants. Moreover, phenomenological method serves to amplify the voices of individuals or groups who might otherwise be marginalized in social research (Nı´ Raghallaigh, 2011).

Additionally, a qualitative phenomenological approach holds the advantage of delving into the intricacies of human behaviour, exploring the manifold perspectives of the participants (Adewale, 2016). Consequently, a qualitative phenomenological method grounded in multiple case studies establishes a framework for the researcher to comprehend the participants' worldview or "social realities from their stances and constructions" (Yin, 1994; Nwokolo, 2012, p. 82).

Research setting

The International Christian Centre, a missionary and religious organization, is situated in a spacious landscape surrounded by tall trees and green vegetation. A gentle breeze, accompanied by the movement of leaves, creates a serene atmosphere for visitors.

This 30-acre facility, since its acquisition in 2005 under the leadership of Pastor Folorunsho, stands as the origin of the International Christian Center in Uhogua, Edo State, Nigeria. Edo State, located in southern Nigeria with Benin City as its capital, is celebrated for its rich cultural heritage and dynamic socio-economic activities. While the state enjoys relative peace, it has also become a haven for internally displaced persons (IDPs), including survivors of the Boko Haram insurgency originating from northern Nigeria.

Boko Haram, officially designated as a terrorist organization, emerged in the early 2000s in Borno State, situated in Nigeria's northeastern region (Adibe, 2013). The group's ideology, reflected in its name, which translates to "Western education is forbidden," opposes Western influence and secular education (Kendhammer & McCain, 2018). Over the years, Boko Haram has perpetrated widespread violence, including kidnappings, mass killings, and the use of suicide bombers, in its pursuit of establishing an Islamic state in northern Nigeria (Aghedo, 2014). This violence has caused large-scale displacement, forcing many survivors to seek refuge in safer regions of the country, including the Christian Centre in Edo State.

The genesis of this Centre can be traced back to Pastor Folorunsho's missionary endeavours in 1991-1992, leading to its official registration with the Edo-state government in 2008 and the Corporate Affairs Commission in 2013. Originally conceived as a 'home for the needy' or a haven for the underprivileged, the Christian Center, initially focused on aiding vulnerable members of society, including children accused of witchcraft, orphans, widows, and young women exiting the sex trade. As time unfolded, the Centre extended its compassion to survivors of Boko Haram displaced in northeastern Nigeria. According to Pastor Folorunsho:

Towards the end of 2012/early 2013, we started a rescue operation in the Northeast of Nigeria to rescue displaced persons wondering in the mountains or hiding in the caves. Over time we were able to bring more than 2000 of them, to our home in Uhogua/Benin city, Nigeria, where they are now in safety and well taken care of (Field notes, 28/12/2018).

The Centre operates fully functional primary and secondary schools. In addition, it hosts the Red Cross Society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and missionaries who have selflessly committed to serving the needs of children, men and women. It is noteworthy that while children constitute a substantial portion of the Christian community's population, these efforts extend to individuals across various age groups (Ebegbulem, 2015). The presence of military personnel is evident, overseeing the entry and exit of all visitors to the Centre. Other notable facilities within the Centre comprise a church, a makeshift medical Centre, extensive play areas, and sports facilities.

The economic downturn in Nigeria, marked by the devaluation of the Naira, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, governmental neglect, and donor fatigue, has created a challenging and precarious reality at the Center (Enogholase, 2016). The stark realities of hunger and a lack of essential facilities, including medical resources and accommodation, may have contributed to incidents of re-traumatization within the Centre. Regrettably, many children in the Center have lost their parents due to the violence inflicted by Boko Haram. Some, though a minority, grapple with fundamental activities like sleeping, eating, talking, or socializing. Additionally, a significant number of these young individuals have witnessed the brutal killings of their loved ones. Nevertheless, despite facing everyday challenges, a substantial majority persevered. While survivors hover on the brink of starvation, they form a resilient mix of individuals, embodying a complex conjunction of hardship and happiness.

Data collection

Eighteen individuals who had experienced victimization by Boko Haram were selected for interviews. Additionally, informal discussions were conducted with several survivors chosen at random. All participants were predominantly from Borno state, the epicentre of Boko Haram's violence. In the selection process, emphasis was placed on including those who had escaped Boko Haram's violence and those who had experienced captivity within Boko Haram's lifeworld. This approach aligns with the recommendation of Miller and Crabtree (2004), who suggested careful selection of respondents to obtain relevant data for the research question. Thus, the study included ten young women aged 18 to 22, as well as eight children, comprising four boys and four girls, all under the age of fourteen.

Furthermore, representatives from the Center's administration also participated in the study. Through conducting interviews and engaging in informal discussions, the primary aim was to gather insights into how the violence perpetrated by Boko Haram and the resulting traumatic experiences shaped the conception of the 'Christian-self,' particularly in terms of reconfiguring traditional attachment theory into attachment to God. Additionally, at times, we recorded these informal discussions using audio tapes. In situations where ambient noise posed challenges to recording, I attentively absorbed the discussions and promptly transcribed them into my fieldnotes to prevent any loss of valuable information gathered from the field.

Next, in the process of interviewing including informal discussion, the researcher aligned with the perspective of Maccoby and Maccoby (1954) that the process of interviewing involves physical contact between the interviewer and the interviewee wherein information is elicited by the former. This ranges from opinion through beliefs to everyday concerns. Thus, the researcher engaged in what Eyles (1988) called "conversation with a purpose," using a semi-structured questionnaire as a framework. This was followed by introducing oneself, explaining the goal of the study and assuring the participants of confidentiality. Next, the Centre's coordinator and his assistants were questioned on how survivors at the Center recovered from the experience of trauma initiated by the violence of Boko Haram. Subsequently, survivors were interviewed, particularly young women and children, to gain insight into their understanding of trauma and their strategies for recovery.

Relying on informal or unstructured forms of interviewing, participants were probed further on issues connected to their everyday life, such as the experience of trauma and recovery practices. Illustrative of these questions includes: What does trauma mean to you? How do religious practices contribute to the process of recovery? How has your understanding of trauma changed since coming to the centre? How does your relationship with God influence your ability to cope with trauma?

The objectives of these questions were to foster a more personal connection, re-establishing not only a relaxed ambiance but also cultivating a congenial rapport with the research participants. This adheres to what Whiting (2008, p.36) characterizes as "intimate encounters in which open, direct, verbal questions are used to elicit detailed narratives and stories". In agreement with the perspective of geographer Valentine (2005, p.111), this approach resonated with the expectation that interviewees could "construct their own accounts of their experiences by describing and explaining their lives in their own words." Consequently, this intersubjective experience, or the collaborative interaction between the researcher and the research participant during interviews, not only blurred conventional boundaries but also indicated a co-creative process in knowledge formation. After completing interviews or informal discussions, participants were given ample opportunities for debriefing, particularly in cases where the process evoked retraumatization. This formed a crucial part of the ethical procedure.

Procedure

The study, approved by Leuven Catholic University's Social and Cultural Anthropology research unit, included children and young women impacted by Boko Haram's violence. Due to varying literacy levels among participants, some faced challenges in comprehending the written informed consent. Consequently, oral permission was obtained from the Centre management before engaging with the children.

Building on this foundation, my extended engagement with the research site, particularly with trauma-recovering populations, emphasized the establishment of trust-based relationships and the provision of emotional support for participants. This aligns with what anthropologist Sluka describes as the effort to "humanize the ethnographic other," ensuring that research subjects are treated with dignity and care. Emotional support from caregivers and Pastor Folorunsho played a critical role in this process. To safeguard participants' emotional well-being, measures such as pausing or discontinuing interviews were implemented, especially in instances of secondary retraumatization.

The study adhered to the "local ethics of the Christian Centre," which required ongoing consent and emphasized ethical sensitivity, particularly when working with children. The names of children were anonymized, and their faces blurred in all research outputs. This precaution was necessary, as some children struggled to fully comprehend the concept of informed consent or the option to withdraw from the study if they felt uncomfortable.

Drawing on my training in care management and certification in memory and trauma studies, as well as the supportive presence of caregivers and the pastor—a qualified guidance counselor—I provided words of comfort when participants recounted distressing experiences. Inspired by Aghedo's (2017, p. 39) principle of employing "common sense" in challenging settings, I decided to halt interviews when participants' narratives entered what philosopher Løgstrup refers to as the "zone of the untouchable" (Guillemin & Heggen, 2008, pp. 294–295). This concept emphasizes respecting the privacy and integrity of deeply personal experiences that require protection from external interference. For this reason, questions related to sexual violence were deliberately omitted, prioritizing participants' well-being.

Data analysis

The data for this study were obtained from a variety of sources, including fieldnotes, interview transcripts, observations. Theories emerged organically during the analysis process, drawing from both the data collected and pre-existing theories found in the literature review.

Our initial step involved systematically organizing the data using Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological analysis of data approach. Creating Microsoft files for each theme, the data were categorized based on concepts, ideas, arguments, principles, and rationale. The significance of the data was derived from the summaries crafted for each theme. illustrative of the emergence of these themes include narratives of displacement, captivity and escape, capturing participants accounts of immersion in violence, fleeing violence and the erosion of lives and properties. Also, narratives of recovery that are contingent on 'spiritual resilience or coping mechanisms with trauma that are contingent on religious practices

Next, these thematic summaries were coded, and their recurrence was explored with other themes. Their points of convergence and divergence were observed, sticking to Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological analysis of data, which, according to Edward and Welch (2011), proves apt for gathering, organizing, and analyzing such narrative datasets. In the context of qualitative phenomenological studies that involve the narration of datasets, Colaizzi's (1978) framework emerges as valuable for various stages of the research process. This includes tasks such as transcription, data extraction, meaning formulation, aggregation of formulated meanings into thematic clusters, and the creation of an exhaustive description. The exhaustive description, in this context, refers to a comprehensive articulation of the experience as conveyed by the study participants. Additionally, Colaizzi's approach proves beneficial for the interpretation of symbolic representation analysis, identification of the fundamental structure of the phenomenon, and the validation of findings through participant involvement (Edward & Welch, 2011, p.165).

In essence, the adoption of Colaizzi's analytic approach proved beneficial in capturing the experiences of women and children in their encounters with Boko Haram. By focusing on the specific context of the Christian Centre, the analysis yielded valuable perspectives on the challenges and accomplishments in addressing the needs of participants impacted by Boko Haram's violence. Furthermore, it illuminated the intersection of religious, socio-cultural, and recovery practices in this context. Within this intersection, survivors find a renewed understanding of their traumatic experiences through a distinct re-evaluation. Viewed in this manner, trauma takes on a different significance, characterized by attachment to God, evident in the cultivation of a compliant and 'religious self' through practices such as prayers. Concurrently, survivors demonstrate acceptance of their altered modes of daily existence amid ongoing challenges, as discussed by scholars such as Meyer (2010) and Bandak (2017).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the adoption of Colaizzi's analytic approach, our data showed that attachment theory provides a solid basis for integrating religious growth and views of God (Kirkpatrick, 1992). In essence these themes emerged: (i) The parallels between the core tenets of attachment theory and the Christian attachment or relationship with God; (ii) Socio-cultural dynamics, including beliefs, norms, and values, play a significant role in reshaping the psychological concept of attachment, thereby extending its application to encompass a Christian perspective on the relationship with God; (iii) Attachment to God functions as a mechanism for trauma recovery that operates through survivors' cultural embedment of resilience and agency; (iv) collaborative endeavours between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the Christian Centre's management facilitate the recovery of IDPs from

trauma. These findings are presented with evidence from survivors in collaboration with the management of the Christian Centre.

Theme 1. The parallels between the tenets of attachment theory and attachment with God.

Utilizing the four features of attachment theory – "secure base, exploration, attachment behaviors, and safe haven" (Knabb & Emerson, 2013, p. 827)[1] - our research integrates these circles of attachment with the stories of survival and recovery enacted by the survivors of Boko Haram at the Christian Centre (Prior & Glaser, 2006; Counted, 2017). Attachment, in this context, refers to the affectional bond that exists between an individual and an attachment figure, such as a caregiver or a parent. In several of the insights gathered from survivors during interviews, it became apparent that attachment theory portrayed how individuals or people learn to experience and act in response to separation and distress within the perspective of core, intimate relations in their lives. Remarkably, "the effect of attachment on human relationships also seems to include our relationships with God" (Mockingbird, 2016). There are similarities between the central theme of attachment theory, such as suffering or the experience of trauma, with those of the Christian narrative on the theme of suffering, alienation from God, and the path to reunion with God through prayers, among other aspects. This is evident in the following excerpts:

They (Boko Haram) attacked our community, which was next to a mountain called Mandara Mountain. It is a very, very, popular mountain… So, when they attacked us, we had to run to that mountain for refuge, and on that mountain, we carried some of our foodstuffs. All our houses were burnt, everything. So, the small quantity of foodstuffs that we were able to take to the mountain to eat also got finished. So, there is nothing we can do but thank God… we got firmly attached to God through prayers. It was not easy, but we survived (Haruna)[2].

They (Boko Haram) cut my leg so that I would not run. So, my leg was bleeding, so I used my wrapper to tie it. I suffered greatly. It was as if my whole world was coming to an end. There was no one to turn to for help. I felt abandoned as everyone was running away from Boko Haram. However, I climbed a tree in the bush with my bleeding leg. On that tree, I prayed to God for help, and when they came looking for us, they did not see us. We were on that tree, but they did not see us. God protected us as we prayed. After they had gone and we came down from the tree, we started running, and we went and saw a Fulani man who helped us (Mariam).

These excerpts highlight the parallels between attachment theory and the relationship between God and humans. By examining the survivors' relationship with God during their escape in the mountains and the bush, our research contributes to a better understanding of attachment theory. For instance, the survivors formed attachments to God, finding comfort, security, and meaning, which aligns with the four features of attachment theories. As their everyday lives, especially their explorations, were disrupted, and their attachments were threatened, they sought safety by running away from Boko Haram. In moments of extreme danger, they found solace in God's sanctuary through prayers and giving thanks. This aligns with Kirkpatrick's findings (1992; 1999) that God serves as a psychological attachment figure and a stable foundation for believers. Additionally, God is portrayed as an active and social being, invoked and involved in intense or perilous moments through prayers.

On this foundation, Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) constructed a theory of attachment to religion. They stated that God is viewed as the ultimate object of attachment, and that attachment theory provides a valuable context for analyzing religious beliefs and actions. The primary idea in most monotheistic religions is that disciples have a personal relationship with a personal God or religious figure (such as Jesus or God) in their daily lives, which serves as the foundation for the religious attachment argument (Counted, 2017, p. 82). The concept of cultivating an attachment with God appeals to religious believers (Gallup & Jones, 1989). Religion implies a feeling of connection with the transcedental (Ferm, 1945), which Counted (2017, p. 82) has associated with the attachment working model advanced within an individual's relationship with a primary caregiver, which influences their future (religious-related) relationships.

Therefore, our research outcomes reshape the conception of attachment theory, wherein the role of the parent or caregiver is supplanted by God, particularly in life-threatening circumstances such as those encountered by Boko Haram survivors. Pargament, K. I., Smith, B. W., Koenig, H. G., & Perez, L. (1998). Patterns of positive and negative religious coping with major life stressors. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 710–724.

Theme 2. Socio-cultural dynamics shape the psychological concept of attachment, extending its application to a Christian perspective on God's relationship.

An extensive interview with survivors revealed how their retreat to the Mandara Mountains played a pivotal role in their survival mechanisms. The narratives of these survivors illustrate how the psychological concept of attachment is approached within a socio-cultural framework, which is further reinforced through a Christian lens, specifically attachment to God. Mary, a 21-year-old (young) woman, underscored this point succinctly:

I was a minor when I was kidnapped, and our community was attacked. I was held for over three months by them (Boko Haram). In the camp, it was said that the best time to escape was during the military bombardment. So, one day soldiers were bombing the camp, and my friends and others were able to escape…We ran and hid in the forest for about two weeks before we could get to the mountain…I spent several days on the mountains before I made my way to Adamawa, and then finally, I heard about this place (Christian Centre). Some of the villagers who ran to the mountain also crossed the border and fled into Cameroon. Some of them later came to the Christian Centre for help. Life on the mountain was not easy, but I held unto God and felt His presence through constant talking to Him in prayers. I saw God through my father, who they killed in my village. And so, I could not see any difficult moments anymore...

Another survivor, Ali, posited:

This mountain was given to our ancestors by God… We often run to this mountain for protection. When they wanted to enslave us, this mountain protected us; when they wanted to Islamize us, this mountain protected us from our enemies… This mountain acted like a father to us even when Boko Haram attacked our community. On this mountain, we prayed and held unto him, and he (God) came to our rescue.

The insights of these survivors fit into and further corroborate the events of 2014, where Boko Haram overran the city of Gwoza. Gwoza, "nestled in the foothills of the Mandara Mountains and 130 kilometers southeast of Maiduguri near the Cameroon border," was Boko Haram's theatre of violence (Kendhammer & McCain 2018, p. 77). Several survivors told the researcher that some parts of this mountain have always been a traditional hideout for people from their village, including having a spiritual import (Bauer, 2016, p. 89). The researcher was informed that the mountain belongs to the gods and no one who sought protection in her sanctuary would come into harm's way. Hence, by its provision of natural shelter, cultural symbolism, and a testament of defiance to those seeking refuge within its confines, namely Ali and Mary, the Mandara mountain emerges as a significant locus in our research. Our findings indicate that sensing the presence of God on the mountain parallels the attachment experienced with one's parental figure and socio-cultural positioning (Thompson, Simpson, & Berlin, 2022). Furthermore, it underscores how the socio-cultural norms ingrained in the Mandara mountains fundamentally shape the comprehension of human relationships and attachment to God. This aligns with anthropologist Luhrmann's concept of the "experience of a positive interaction with the supernatural" (Luhrmann, 2013, p.708).

Mary's experience with God at Mandara Mountain illustrates what Tanya Luhrmann (2013, p. 708) characterises as "a positive interaction with the supernatural." In this hallowed geography—defined as both a sanctuary and a symbol of spiritual defiance—Mary nurtures a deep awareness of heavenly presence. This experience is not simply passive or abstract; it arises from intentional acts of imagination. According to Luhrmann's ethnographic research, the development of sensory and emotional closeness with the supernatural is facilitated by deliberate mental activities that make the imaginal appear 'more real' than its symbolic origins would imply.

This dynamic aligns with psychologist Mary Watkins' (1986) notion of the imaginational relationship, in which humans communicate dialogically with inner symbols, metaphors, and images originating from the psyche. While Watkins underscores unconscious elements, Mary's experience seems more deliberate and self-directed. Mary utilises spiritual approaches, including solitary prayer, inner dialogue, and quiet meditation, to create a relational space that cultivates heavenly connection, emotional stability, and existential coherence. Her joy in God's presence, developed through trauma and displacement, serves not as escapism but as an emotional strategy for survival. This experiential connection offers relief and allows her to reinterpret suffering as significant within a wider theological and cosmic context.

Similarly, Ali's experiences of divine relationship or attachment indicate that these activities are not isolated occurrences but are socially shared and ritually reinforced. The mountain serves as both a physical refuge and a locus of religious fervour, where emotional, material, and symbolic dimensions intersect to facilitate recovery. This perspective aligns with Birgit Meyer's (2004) concept of aesthetics of persuasion, which foregrounds the sensory, material, and ritual dimensions through which religious ideas become experientially convincing and emotionally resonant. Rather than relying solely on Western psychological constructs such as attachment theory or trauma diagnosis, this study attends to the reframing of attachment through embodied practices, emphasizing how symbolic forms render spiritual experiences both real and therapeutic for survivors.

In this context, recovery encompasses not just psychological aspects but also sensory and relational dimensions, grounded in local cosmologies and corporeal practices (cf. Jegede, 2005; Kleinman, 1988). The recovery process is connected to local ways of expressing grief and healing, which blend Christian beliefs with traditional ideas about ancestor protection, rituals for cleansing, and moral improvement. These multifarious frameworks illustrate that coping is manifested not only through faith in a transcendent deity but also through acts that stimulate the senses, activate memory, and foster a re-enchanted moral cosmos.

Theme 3. Attachment to God functions as a mechanism for trauma recovery that operates through survivors' cultural embedment of resilience and agency.

Survivors assert their resilience and agency by engaging in attachment or collaboration with God's protective function. They do this in the ways they relate or bond with God through faith and hope. This is evident in the manner their connection or attachment to God extends to their fellow survivors, including the significant role of the bush as a cultural phenomenon. In the words of Loreta, "We made our wishes of safety and survival known to God through prayers while we were in the bush". For Mariam:

We were in close union with God through faith, hope, and prayer in the bush while escaping from Boko Haram. We slept in the trees, and we crawled on our bellies to avoid being captured by Boko Haram. We fed on grasses and wild fruits and encouraged each other to be strong…Many people died, even though they were Christians, but those of us who survived unwaveringly held onto God firmly through his grace

The bush[3] provided safe spaces as well as being the fulcrum in which Mariam's engagement with everyday life speaks to their union or attachment to God, thereby birthing cultural embedment of resilience (Obeyesekere, 1990; Güngör & Strohmeier, 2020). The bush is associated with meaningful cultural resources that are accessible to individuals (Ungar, 2011). In other words, trajectories associated with resilience, like sleeping on the tree or crawling, are culturally embedded because they express societal understanding of coping or perseverance in the face of traumatic experiences. Also, it allows survivors to creatively reimagine coping, especially their choices of crawling on their belly, rather than walking, within the notion of suspended life in transit. This aligns with what Spiro (1987) refers to as the implementation of a defense mechanism that is culturally constituted. It echoes in Botou and her colleagues' perspective (2017, p.131), wherein "resilience helps the individual face these adversities and difficulties and is built through the individual's dynamic interaction with his/her environment" as well as its "scaffolding by cultural, social, psychologic, and physiologic processes (Cameron et al., 2007, p. 285).

However, unlike the stable attachment typically observed between children and their parents or caregivers (Bowlby, 1969), Loreta described a relationship with God that is both dynamic and agentive, contingent upon divine grace and a deep trust in the divine. Simply identifying as Christian was not enough to ensure God's involvement; active participation was essential. This perspective aligns with Maltby and Hall's (2012) exploration of the intersection of trauma, attachment, and spirituality. Their research highlights how religious practices, such as meditation, provided pathways of hope that aided Catholic nuns in recovering from the trauma of rape inflicted by their abusive spiritual directors to whom they were initially attached.

Also, in relating to God through prayers as well as having faith and hope in him, the contours of their agency and resilience were enhanced. Illustrative of this, prayers are not merely a passive submission from a troubled soul to God, but also as "forms and actions in the world" that communicate their creativity or agency (Bandak 2017, p. 5). That is, establishing their belief in God as Christians, thereby highlighting how religious beliefs

(such as prayers) promote resilience and recovery from trauma (Schweitzer et al. 2007; Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012). In Christianity, the belief in God's agentive actions or involvement in human life holds great significance (Bruehler, 2018). Scholars like Smith and Denton (2005) and Dean (2010) highlight how Christians articulate God's work in the world and the lives of individuals. Specifically, God's intervention, especially in situations of peril caused by Boko Haram, establishes God as an active social agent.

Importantly, not all survivors derived comfort from religious structures. Numerous individuals revealed instances of spiritual estrangement. Musa, one respondent, stated, “Following my brother's death, I was unable to pray.” I felt abandoned by God. Upon my reference to Christian forgiveness, he responded, “The talk on forgiveness angered me…” Do they (Boko Haram) offer forgiveness? The paper highlights the constraints of faith-based coping, especially for individuals experiencing sorrow, ambivalence, or fractured belief in heavenly entities, emphasising the necessity to regard religious coping as not universally advantageous, but rather contingent, relational, and occasionally isolating. This highlights the contradictory role of religiosity in post-conflict rehabilitation, despite extensive literature underscoring its protective effect (Pargament et al., 1998). Such perspectives advocate for prudence by excessively idealising religious affiliation as generally beneficial.

Theme 4. Collaborative endeavours between IDPs and the Christian Centre's management facilitate the recovery of IDPs from trauma.

As reported by multiple survivors interviewed by the researcher, the guidance of the Centre’s coordinator, Pastor Folorunsho, combined with the embodiment of Christian love, facilitated the process of recovery. This reconfiguration of attachment theory within a Christian framework altered conventional interpretations. A discussion between the researcher and Gideon further elucidates this viewpoint:

Anthropologist Emmanuel: How come people address one another as brothers and sisters despite coming from different parts of Borno state?

Gideon: It is because of the love of Christ.

Anthropologist Emma: What does this love of Christ mean?

Gideon: They teach us (the Centre’s management) how to love each other unconditionally. We call ourselves brothers and sisters because the same issue (the experience of trauma) brought us here. So, we see ourselves as one.

Anthropologist Emmanuel: But you are not related by blood, I insisted.

Gideon: Even though we are not related by blood, we become one through having a relationship with Jesus Christ, and so, we love ourselves as brothers and sisters. We live in the same place, and we shared our pains with each other and comfort ourselves with prayers that our father taught us (Pastor Folorunsho). The teachings of our pastor on the love of Christ, brings us into a communion with God, thereby making us to forget the ‘bad-bad things’(traumas) that happened to us which keep coming to us in our dreams .

This was further buttressed by Pastor Folorunsho:

Despite undergoing traumatic experiences, these youngsters have maintained a sense of happiness through the word of God we fed them. The harrowing ordeals they endured several years ago might be hard to fathom, but a significant number of them have since recovered, attributing their recovery to their relationship with God

Gideon’s insights show that the way people relate to God conforms to how human attachment patterns are appropriated from a shared brotherhood (or sisterhood). While coping with their traumas, they work through or walk with God via having or imputing Jesus in their attachment-based love relationship (Proctor et al., 2009; Kirkpatrick, 1995). Using this God-walk template, Proctor and her colleagues (2009) label it as ‘secure-autonomous model of Attachment to God’ in conceptualizing the Christian expression of love. This aligns with the findings of Proctor et al. (2009, p. 247) wherein “the securely attached Christian is one who feels confident of God’s ongoing presence, availability and responsiveness, especially in the face of adverse or threatening

situations (the haven function)".

More importantly, the preaching of Pastor Folorunsho, a spiritual authority, is regarded as the embodiment of 'truth' by the survivors. Several of Pastor Folorunsho's sermons (which revolve around empathizing with the survivors, providing counseling, promoting mindfulness, and above all, explaining the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit) brought about significant changes, particularly in the way these changes were physically manifested. These changes fostered a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood within the Christian Centre community. Instead of acting as a father figure, Pastor Folorunsho assumed the role of a spiritual authority, guiding the survivors towards a closer relationship with God. This relationship, rather than being a direct one, was mediated through intermediaries or agents, such as Pastor Folorunsho himself. In contrast to (some) attachment styles, where the father is considered the ultimate 'secure attachment' in traumatic events (Bretherton, 2010), our research highlights the importance of recognizing the collaborative efforts between spiritual authorities and the influences of IDPS in the recovery process. This underscores the significance of attaching oneself to God through the Word of God and Christian Love.

Additionally, it highlights the integration of attachment theory within a socio-cultural lens, which offers a holistic understanding of trauma recovery. Illustrative of this is that attachment styles extend beyond the father-mother-caregiver relationship with infants, highlighting broader socio-cultural dynamics. Attachment to God through religious authorities serves as a recovery mechanism, particularly in socio-cultural contexts with shared brotherhood and sisterhood. Religious practices, such as those found in Christian Love, are essential in trauma recovery (Knabb & Emerson, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 1992).

DISCUSSION

The study provides a theoretically robust analysis grounded in attachment theory and its religious extensions; however, its initial framing is predominantly influenced by Western psychological constructs. The amalgamation of John Bowlby's and Mary Ainsworth's frameworks offers a vital foundation; nonetheless, the experiences of Boko Haram survivors indicate a more intricate, culturally ingrained comprehension of attachment that frequently surpasses the parent-child relationship. In the Christian Centre, attachment to God was not merely a reflection of early childhood connections but was facilitated through group prayer, shared suffering, and faith in divine protection—an experience that was profoundly relational and often emotionally intense.

This research draws upon the accounts of survivors such as Mary, Haruna, and Mariam, who not only called upon divine protection but also contextualised their recovery inside culturally significant locations like the Mandara mountain or 'the bush'—areas imbued with ancestral and spiritual importance. These places, although understood via a Christian lens at the Centre, also incorporated elements from ancient indigenous cosmologies. Ali, a participant, stated: "This mountain was bestowed upon our ancestors by God…" Even before the emergence of Boko Haram, our community sought refuge there during periods of conflict. It safeguarded us. It transcends a mere rock; it embodies the presence of the divine.

These narratives disclose a multifaceted interplay of Christian belief, indigenous landscapes, and socio-cultural symbols. In particular, excerpts from the participants demonstrated how Christian practices contribute to a more nuanced understanding of psychological attachment. However, in employing attachment-based categories to express attachment to God (Maltby & Hall, 2012), we wish to depart from its emphasis on deterministic and fixed attachment styles that assume that parents in all cases influence the personality of their children as well as its disregard of socio-cultural mediation. Instead, by following the insights of Mary, Ali, Gideon Loreta, Mariam, and Haruna, we ascribe a more socio-cultural basis: the attachment concept, taking it to be a fundamental feature of human bonding with God. It is precisely this productive synthesis or synergies that create the possibility for intersubjective bonds to be formed in places such as the mountain, bush, including several others, that support resilience.

By invoking an intimate relationship with God through prayers, including others, they showed they were agentive on one hand. On the other hand, they demonstrated their resilience in sustaining their lives. The attachment systems of survivors were reactivated when they turned to God in moments of trouble. In Gwoza, the survivors' hometown in Nigeria's north-east, likewise in many places across Africa, the father-figure as a

protector is widespread (Andrews, 2016)[4]. Children look up to their fathers for the provision of life's necessities. They call upon him for help in moments of great distress.

In this way, notions of father-figure embed and shape the trajectories of Christianity, particularly the Pentecostal version, that trends among the research participants which untangles and even reforge the relationship between self, father, and God (Eves, 2010). Put differently, the idea of an earthly father is replaced with that of a heavenly father. It is this same relationship mobilized through cultural practices that is interwoven with Christian ideas to produce a new constellation of practices, while the logic, such as that of an earthly father's protection, ties into those of a heavenly God, remains unchanged. This logic agrees with what Hollan (2013, p. 727) refers to as being "embedded in particular social and interpersonal contexts". Many of the survivors perceive God as "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46, vs 1). Therefore, in the bush or the mountain, their encounter with God traced through the Christian practices of prayers is rooted in their cultural rhythm of everyday life, which underpins the father-figure protector. Resilience or survival for these survivors, such as Mariam and Loreta, who were not held captives by Boko Haram, lies in their creative (re)appropriation or bonding with this father-figure.

Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice and the Implications for Policy Recommendations

The study shows how attachment, a psychological concept, acquires new significance when mirrored through a Christian perspective. This engagement offered the chance to probe deeper into the experiences of displaced children and young women of Northeast Nigerian extraction, particularly in the context of their transition to recovery within the Christian Centre (Ajayi, 2020). In highlighting the process of recovery, our findings conform to the usefulness of attachment categories in framing the relationship between God and humans as a foundational framework of analysis (Maltby & Hall, 2012).

Through this frame of analysis, our research addresses a notable gap in the existing body of literature. It underscores the significance of a socio-cultural context in shaping human recovery within the framework of attachment to God. In the context of Christianity, several significant factors play a role in recovery mechanisms, notably in responding to and forging attachment to God as well as supporting survivors' recovery journeys. These include: the role of grace, notions of suffering, prayers, word of God, 'born again', and Christian love, through which survivors act out or work through in orienting towards survival (Lester, 2013, p. 753). Therefore, the results of this research demonstrate how socio-cultural and religious beliefs can serve as valuable factors informing effective recovery practices. In doing so, the formulation of recovery plans by policy makers, psychologists, amongst others, should be especially suited to each survivor's particular requirements that are sensitive to socio-cultural and religious praxis.

Finally, findings from this research will be of interest to a broad range of people, namely students studying peace and conflict. This research has the potential to enhance several academic fields such as Gender Studies, International and Globalization Studies, History, Theology, Psychology, Political Science, and Military and Security Studies.

Also, this research not only expands the theoretical framework but also underscores multiple avenues for practical application. For instance, Faith-based organisations ought to get trauma-informed pastoral care training that honours spiritual autonomy while recognising the varied routes to healing.

Secondly, NGOs and humanitarian organisations must guarantee that psychosocial support programs do not presume uniformity of belief among survivors. Interventions must encompass Christian, Muslim, and indigenous cosmologies while providing secular coping alternatives.

Thirdly, Mental health practitioners ought to incorporate culturally relevant practices—such as storytelling, prayer groups, drumming, or ancestor invocation—when suitable, ensuring permission and ethical considerations are prioritised.

Finally, Policymakers developing support for internally displaced persons (IDPs) should transcend viewing trauma solely as an individual disorder and recognise it as a societal condition influenced by displacement, inequality, and fractured kinship relations.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

The emphasis of this research was on the recovery practices, namely attachment to God, adopted by Internally Displaced Persons, particularly young women and children at the International Christian Centre in Edo State, Nigeria. Consequently, the research findings should not be considered representative of all Internally Displaced Persons across Nigeria.

Furthermore, by employing multiple case studies performed at the International Christian Center, it is worth noting that all interviewees identified as Christian. Their allegiance to the Christian faith may have an impact on their viewpoints (Adejumo et al., 2019). Critics have labeled this viewpoint as the 'Christianization process'. However, the Centre's coordinator has refuted this characterization, dismissing it as a misinterpretation of the Centre's mission, which is primarily concerned with assisting those displaced from the Northeast, particularly residents of Southern Borno, regardless of religious affiliation, some of whom have historically been Christians.

The study delved into the perspectives and interpretations of participants regarding the psychological concept of attachment, particularly in the context of Christian practices such as attachment to God through prayer. However, it overlooked the examination of other significant Christian practices like the role of grace, notions of sacrifice, or suffering in understanding trauma recovery. These overlooked aspects could have provided valuable insights into how attachment to God complements psychological attachment theories.

Furthermore, the study's focus on internalizing Christian principles of resilience in trauma recovery may inadvertently overlook the profound impacts of trauma on survivors themselves. Therefore, there is a critical need for future research to expand beyond this Christian-centric perspective and advocate for broader measures such as restitution, social justice, and compensation for all survivors of Boko Haram, regardless of their religious affiliations (Herman, 1992). This inclusive approach is essential for addressing the diverse needs of survivors across various religious backgrounds.

Thus, subsequent rounds of this research should specifically examine interfaith or Islamic coping mechanisms among other internally displaced individuals (IDPs) in Nigeria, alongside secular or humanist reactions to trauma. Certain survivors privately acknowledged experiencing crises of faith or spiritual fatigue—frequently unexpressed in formal interviews—indicating the constraints of religious coping as a universal approach.

CONCLUSION

Numerous studies have investigated the transition from trauma to recovery through the lens of attachment theory. However, there is a lack of research examining how a socio-cultural integration of attachment theory enhances our comprehension of recovery (Bowlby, 1980; 1982; Maltby & Hall, 2012). The findings indicate that reinterpreting classical attachment theory within a socio-cultural context, particularly through the exploration of attachment to God, illuminates the recovery process for survivors of Boko Haram at the International Christian Centre. Specifically, by redefining the attachment figure as God, individuals seek protection through prayers and communal support, demonstrating how norms, beliefs, and religious practices influence trauma recovery. Ultimately, this research merges attachment theory with attachment to God, emphasizing its socio-cultural dimension.

To this end, this research contributes to the decolonization of dominant trauma recovery frameworks by embedding them within Christian religious and African socio-cultural lifeworlds. Second, it reveals the spectrum of religious coping, especially its foregrounding of survivor voices, not merely as data points but as epistemic agents shaping the meanings of trauma and recovery.

Authors' 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. The authors attest that they made the choice to submit the work for publication and that they have full access to all the study's materials. The writers claim to have no conflicting agendas. Upon reasonable request, the researcher will make the datasets and transcripts utilized and analyzed for the study available to you.

ENDNOTES

1. The presence of the caregiver, who serves as an oasis of inspiration and assistance for the child while they experience their surroundings, is referred to as the secure base. The concept of exploration emphasizes the infant's ability to securely explore his or her surroundings. When a child is exploring and something potentially threatening, like a stranger or a new environment, comes up, they engage in attachment behaviors. A haven is the reconnection between the child and the caregiver after experiencing the outside world.
2. All the names in this paper are pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. However, the head of the Centre, Pastor Folorunsho, requested that his real name be used in this research.
3. Among my participants who hail from Gwoza, there is the belief that whoever ventures into this bush never comes back alive. Those who came out alive attribute it to their relationship or attachment to God.
4. However, calling upon the father figure was not always the case. In some places in south-eastern Nigeria, mothers were invoked as symbols of protection. Hence, the name Nneka (mother is greater). It is also instructive to state that George Floyd, an African American man, called out to his (dead) mother in moments of anguish.

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