

Crisis Intervention as A Theory and A Model in Social Work: A Panacea Against Militancy in The Niger Delta of Nigeria

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Abstract - The practice of social work is one that is inextricably linked to a sound theoretical base, owing to the wide range of systematic procedures it follows in problem solving. Social work can't be separated from science because of its emphasis on empiricism and scientific methodologies in case treatment. Therefore, sets of ideas and constructs well captured in theories and models become germane to the explanation, description and eventual antidotes to social work cases. It is in this context that model and theory would be made to fit into jurisdictions different from each other. This would be buttressed with the crisis intervention, utilized repeatedly in social work to deal with cases that occasion disequilibrium at micro, mezzo and macro levels of social work practice and engagement. In order to achieve this, militancy in the Niger Delta which have necessitated political, social and economic crisis for the citizens, Nigerian state and the government, would serve as a point of reference. The Crisis Intervention and its relationship to militancy in the Niger Delta region, would be further established in the light of explaining, describing and remedying the phenomenon.

Key Words - Amnesty, Crisis, Crisis Intervention, Militancy, Model, Niger Delta, Theory

1. Introduction

The utilization of theories and models in the practice of social work has become an integral part of the profession. This is hinged on the notion that social work is largely a scientific discipline that deals with problem solving in human relationship (Okafor, 2004). Hence, in handling cases in social work, there must be scientifically justified reasons that would explain, describe, offer possible predictions and make predictions where necessary. Where such reasons are lacking, the social work profession becomes nothing but a field not different from the layman's problem solving engagement with the society (Coulshed & Orme, 2006). Such absence would also necessitate social work profession losing its relevance among disciplines that are respected for their strict adherence to empiricism and systematic methodologies of enquiry and actions. It is in this regard that definitions offered to social work profession ensure the inclusion of an unwavering compliance to the norms and values of the scientific community. Very pivotal to these norms and values are theories and models. Among such definitions offered to social work is that made by the IFSW (2014) which has been consensually agreed to be the universally acceptable definition of the profession. The definition states that:

"Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for

diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing."

The above definition compartmentalizes the demands of the topic under research. It clearly shows the interconnections between the social work profession and the utilization of theoretical underpinnings and as well the unavoidable place of the profession in conditions of crisis that challenge individuals (micro), groups (mezzo) and the society (macro). To this end, social work has been viewed to be a scientific based problem solving discipline that engages people at different levels of the societal space. It is scientific because it does not operate in a vacuum or from common sense but with detailed rules of engagement determined and predetermined by theoretical approaches and models that have gone through the furnace of empirical verifications and confirmed for application (Richmond, 1917). Social workers handle various problems with varying intensity which determines the degree of exigency required to remedy them (Lewis, 2005). When cases possess very high intensity such that if exigent responses are not made, there could be the possibility of a total breakdown, crisis could be said to have surfaced. In handling such cases, the social worker resorts to the utilization of crisis intervention strategies which would be discussed in this paper as both a theory and model with special reference to issues of militancy in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria.

The difference between a theory and a model is one that seems a bit confusing for users of such terms. This is because of the scientific origin and implication of both terms. Hence, it would be rightly said that the similarities of the terms are greater than their differences. Theories have their roles in practice and so do model too (Nilsen, 2015). However, this paper hopes to x-ray their differences amidst their similarities for the purpose of understanding their implications in the course of actual practice and further refrain from conflicting their various stance. It is pertinent for social workers to understand this, because of their frequent usage of the variants of the terms during their engagements with service users (Adams, 2009).

In another development, the Niger Delta area of Nigeria has been more or less a hotbed in the country alongside the Boko-Haram ravaged North-East of Nigeria. This area despite its richness in oil resources has been dotted with series of unrest, owing to uneven distribution of state resources, oil exploration/drilling instigated ecocide and less attention being paid to their plight. This was described by Ogege (2011) as a place filled with frustrated expectations. The oil resources of the Niger Delta account for over 95% of the Nigeria's export earnings and up to 70% of the revenue accruing to the Federal Government of Nigeria annually (Faleti, 2012). Yet, it was observed that the region has had severe sufferings relating to poverty, environmental degradation, poor economic redistribution, absence of Federal presence and among others (Ojatorotu, 2006; Nnorom & Odigbo, 2015). From the foregoing, series of non-violent measures have been adopted to draw the attention of the Federal Government and other significant bodies, but they all proved abortive. Worthy of note is the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), headed by Ken Saro Wiwa, who and eight others, faced death penalty under the military regime of Late General Sani Abacha on November 10, 1995 (International Crisis Group, 2015).

The abortiveness of peaceful measures regarding the plight of the Niger Deltans, led to a shift to violent measures, climaxing militancy which became a precedent to other vices such as: youth restiveness, kidnapping, pipe line vandalism, oil theft and other forms of outlawed actions and guerilla combat with national security outfits (Ogege, 2011). This seriously posed huge threats to the economic and social sustainability of the Nigerian State (Ikelegbe, 2010; Ubhenin, 2013). To this end, amnesty became an option and was pursued differently by the President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration and Late President Umaru Musa Yar'dua. Finally, the later sustained the programme alongside his predecessor, President Goodluck Jonathan from the years 2009 – 2015 (Mitee,

2010). 30,000 ex-militants were captured in the programme (Mbalisi, Eheazu & Kiyenowei, 2012).

Nonetheless, with the return of militancy (Niger Delta Avengers) to the region in 2016 soon after the ascendancy of President Muhammadu Buhari, it is obvious that the amnesty initiative did not arrest the vice (Ogundipe, 2016). This has led to shortage in the production of crude oil which is the mainstay of the country's economy, as militants usually take to the attack of oil installations (Wodu, 2015). With the serious economic recession in Nigeria and the return of militancy in the Niger Delta plunging more hardships alongside unrest in the North-East coming from Boko-Haram which has deepened the nation's expenses on security, Nigeria is obviously in a crisis situation. This paper would thus seek to achieve logical relationships between the Niger Delta Saga and the crisis intervention theory and model utilized by social workers in the face of similar situations.

2. An Overview of Theory and Model

Theory and model are products of scientific enquiry and they are utilized for scientific purposes of investigations, explanations, descriptions and predictions. Theory has been defined to be a set of analytical principles or statements designed to structure our observation, understanding and explanation of the world in cause and effect terms (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). Thompson (2010) puts it further that a theory is a statement with a general implication about the real world whose fundamental truth is evidential and obtained through rigorous scientific methodologies. It must as well explain relationships of the embedded variables in the statement in a provable way. More so, Teater (2010) also defined theory to be a hypothesis, an idea or prediction about what can or might happen in certain situations given certain circumstances.

From the definitions, it can be deduced that a theory largely plays predictive and explanatory roles of variables that usually take a cause and effect position. Theories are more or less passive since they are not yet active in the realities of the tasks they seek to explain. They could be likened to policy documents and compass for directions leading to actions. In the case of social work, theories are made for problem solving purposes, as they are regarded to be templates guiding identification of problems, understanding and predicting dimensions of problems, assessment of problems and eventually problem solving (Payne, 2005). Also, theories do not just all of a sudden happen. They follow a systematic process before they are formed which is usually led by critical observation, formulation of hypothesis, before the gathering and

analysis of relative data to confirm or refute the relationship among variables in the hypothesis, construct or ideas. This climaxes the essence of empiricism in science that is hinged on critical observation and experience (Barbie, 2010). Examples of theories favoured in social work include: Social systems theory, role theory, psychodynamic theory, social learning theory, conflict theory, empowerment theory, game theory, attachment theory and among others. It is in this respect that the crisis intervention would be shown to have fulfilled the requirements to be referred to as a theory capable of explaining in scientific logical terms the case of the Niger Delta.

On the other hand, models are not farfetched from the definitions and features of theories. There is just a thin line separating the both terms. It is in corroboration to the foregoing that Teater (2010) asserts that a model is usually a theory or method depicted logically and/or graphically with the intention of not just the 'what' of phenomena but the 'how'. This puts forward the action oriented nature of a model as capable of driving theories into the field of reality for pragmatic exercise. In also defining model, Carpiano & Daley (2006) opined that a model is consistent with the expressions of phenomenology, as it typically involves a deliberate simplification of a phenomenon or a specific aspect of it. They maintained that the difference between a model and a theory is usually not clear. While theories take a broader scope of explanation, models tend to be narrow and precise in explanation. Thus, models are more descriptive to explanatory whereas theories are largely explanatory (Cairney, 2012). In corroboration to the foregoing, Thompson (2011) is of the view that models are largely descriptive but they are pivotal to breathing life into theories. Hence, models serve as a bridge connecting theories to practice. In summary, it can be rightly said that models are theories in operation. They are like programmes responsible for the driving of policies. Examples of models favoured in social work include: Task Centred model, Problem Solving model, Behaviour Modification model, Crisis model, Solution Focused model, Narrative model and among others. It is in lieu of the foregoing that this paper seeks to view crisis intervention as a model capable of remedying the Niger Delta saga.

One of the leading features of science is skepticism (Neuman, 2007). This factor is responsible for the reason why the assumptions and tenets of theories and models cannot go unquestioned. Present day theories and models are subject to being refuted with valid arguments and propositions which could end up in the establishment of new theories and models in the future. Fundamental to this circle of contest is that theoretical knowledge is often partial, provisional and value laden. What is accepted as a 'good theory or model' today may be shown to be

inadequate and replaced by a better one tomorrow (Thompson, 2010). It is on this note that theories and models are best utilized in the context of the peculiarities of the issues they face. Achieving such validity becomes their essence. A quick table would be shown below categorizing the differences and between theories and models.

Table 1: Differences between theories and models

S/No	THEORIES	MODELS
1	They are collection of statements not always concise and precise.	They are always straight to the point depicted through diagrams and step by step approaches.
2	They are not always readily operational for direct practice.	They are readily operational for practice.
3	Theories link ideas, hypotheses and constructs bringing about fundamental assumptions in an analytical statement like fashion.	Models link the analysis of theories to the realities of practice in a pragmatic fashion.
4	Theories are like policy documents ready for implementation.	Models are like programmes implementing the dictates of the content of the policy document.
5	Theories are largely explanatory and predictive.	Models are largely descriptive and action oriented.
6	They are complex.	They are for the most simplified.

3. Similarities between theories and models

- Theories and models are products of scientific enquiry and methodologies.
- Theories and models offer scientific analysis to social phenomena.
- Both express relationships between variables in a cause and effect style either directly or indirectly.
- Theories and models are responsible for the scientific justification of practice, secluding the haphazard implications associated with practicing with common sense.
- Both are objective.
- Theories and models are subject to be contested and flawed, leading to the development of better ones.

4. Crisis and Crisis Intervention

Literally, crisis refer to situations that tend to have exceeded the immediate capacity of a person or system. It usually demands urgent attention because of the severity of

its dangerous implications. It is in this vein that Roberts (2000) avers that crisis is a period of disequilibrium and severely reduced functioning, which is a resultant effect of an event or situation that ensues a significant problem that exceeds familiar coping strategies of an individual or a system. In another definition, crisis guru, Rapoport (1970) defined crisis from a homeostatic implication. She maintained that crisis is an upset in a steady state that necessitates hazardous situations for individuals. These situations are fostered by a problem that could be described as loss, threat or challenge. In further defining crisis, Roberts and Yeager (2009) are of the opinion that it is a *subjective response to a stressful or traumatic life event or a series of events that are perceived by the person as hazardous, threatening or extremely upsetting, which do not resolve using traditional coping methods*. From the definitions above, it can be summarily stated that crisis is a self-perception of threat to the smooth frequency of existence and development of people and also transcending their innate abilities to overcome. It is in this vein that Roberts (2005) highlighted three interrelated factors that must be present before it can be said that crisis has occurred. They are:

- A stressful and hazardous event
- Self-perception that defines the situation stressful and hazardous
- Inability to respond with familiar and traditional coping mechanisms

At the point of crisis, people are said to have been exhausted and obviously must have lost the tendency to function unaided. This becomes the place where the social worker comes in using skills in crisis intervention to guarantee a return to homeostasis and restore quality of life (Pincus & Minahan, 1977). It should be noted that what might be perceived by an individual or system as crisis might be a smooth ride for another. Hence, crisis is relative and must be treated in such regard according to the perception of the individual or system facing the situation (Lewis, 2005). However, social workers must ensure the provision of supportive mechanisms to avoid conflagration of situations by service users to the status of crisis, when in all actual sense they are not. Therefore, social workers must be diligent in assessing the cognitive perceptions and environmental stimuli of service users in crisis situation, to enable them provide effective responses.

In furtherance, crisis intervention is a term that is used as a response to crisis related situations. It is an integral part of the social work profession and has become a point of reference for handling situations that have exceeded the traditional problem solving and coping capacity of service users. Which occasions a case where these service users crave for exigent professional attention (Pierson & Thomas, 2010). Teater (2010) summarily defined

crisis intervention to a brief model that seeks to mobilize resources of service users in a well calculated attempt to improve their level of coping and problem solving skills and as well boost confidence so as to achieve a sustained homeostasis and quality of life. In Roberts (2005: 5), "crisis intervention has an ultimate goal to bolster available coping methods or help individuals re-establish coping and problem solving abilities while helping them to take concrete steps toward managing their feelings and developing an action plan". The foregoing apparently implies that crisis intervention is both reactive and proactive as it takes to both curative and preventive measures respectively (Dziegielewski & Powers, 2005).

Crisis in its literal sense conveys huge sense of negativity. This is because, when people hear the term, all they readily think are cases of devastation. In this vein, this paper seeks to debunk that notion as crisis should be more defined in terms of its outcome than motive. Etymologically, crisis emanated from the Greek word – "krisis" which implies *decision* or *turning point* (Poal, 1990). Hence, the essence of crisis is akin to the fact of making decisions, given its importance capable of engendering growth and development. It is for this reason that Roberts (2005) argued that crisis experience may be traumatic for people but such experience can serve the purpose of growth and development. Therefore, this paper seeks to view crisis from its essence as against its literal implication.

5. Crisis Intervention as Theory and Model

Having explained the conditions of a theory and a model, this session of this work would delineate the crisis intervention into two functional jurisdictions of theory and model. While the former would be concerned with the fundamental assumptions and interconnectivity of the variables, the later would be pragmatic regarding providing a step by step consequential process that should be followed in the realities of cases. Crisis intervention as a theory would explain the conditions necessary that should define the status of crisis with particular reference to the Niger Delta saga, while crisis intervention as a model would be more concerned with solution focused strategies to remedy the ills and vices obtainable in the Niger Delta.

The fundamental assumption of the crisis theory is that people are endowed with resilience and coping mechanisms to accommodate, deal and surmount stressful and hazardous events, yet in certain exceptions, their resilience and coping capacity become insufficient and inadequate which leads them into a disequilibrium and failing state. At this point, the victims now describe their situation as crisis. However, this experience can still foster an opportunity that would consequentially amount to growth and development of the victims (Eaton & Roberts, 2009; Teater, 2010). From the foregoing, the crisis theory has

set the benchmark for cases that would be attributed the status of crisis. These benchmarks are consistent with the three interrelated factors cited earlier that characterize the fact of crisis.

The goal of the crisis intervention model becomes therapeutic and action oriented. Fundamentally, the crisis model is aimed at restoring homeostasis and quality of life through pragmatic systematic solutions that would improve and restore problem solving and coping capacity of service users, and as well restore their confidence, strength and resources (Lindemann, 1944; Caplan, 1964). Crisis intervention model is being used by several disciplines but in social work, we adopt Robert's (1991) seven-stage crisis intervention model for our own intervention. It flows in the order below:

1. Plan and conduct crisis and biopsychosocial assessment (considering consequences of lethality)
2. Establish rapport and rapidly establish relationship
3. Identify dimensions of presenting problem(s)
4. Explore feelings and emotions
5. Generate and explore alternatives
6. Formulate, develop and implement an action plan
7. Follow-up plan and agreement

6. Crisis Intervention Model Remediating the Niger Delta Question

From the fundamental assumptions of the crisis theory, it has been established that the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and the entire country is at crisis. The resurgence of militancy in the region and the various dimensions of losses it portends for the Nigerian state is devastating and inimical to the growth and development of the country. It is upon such precedent that it is expedient for the Nigerian state to think through possible and pragmatic solutions to circumvent the gargantuan consequences of economic rape and socio-political ruptures and mishaps it has been deeply plunged into. It is in favour of such solutions and remedies that the crisis intervention theory has been used in justifying the country as really in crisis, and the crisis intervention model as a solution focused approach to the saga. Thus, this section of this work would be dedicated to the applicability of this model to the Niger Delta question following its systematic outline of procedures. More so, the model would be used in this work as a social work prescription but not necessarily exclusive to the profession and its professionals in practice. Hence, significant bodies and persons associated to resolving the Niger Delta crisis, can actually adopt the model and its positions.

1. Plan and conduct a crisis assessment paying attention to consequences of lethality: The assessment of the Niger Delta area as crisis affected is an established fact. Its lethal consequences threaten the socio-economic and

political sustainability of both the region and the entire country. Nigeria as an oil dependent nation relies so much on oil operations in the Niger Delta as a primary source of its revenue generation. Nigeria is already losing an estimate of 16 billion dollars daily owing to its drop in oil production from over 2.1 million barrels per day to less than 1.5 mbpd (Onuoha, 2016). This is coming in the face of the drop in global oil prices since mid-2014. Thus, the government of the day has since its ascendancy to the seat of governance, consistently complained of the harsh economic conditions facing the nation. This has further led to serious hardships for the citizens. More so, the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta has also affected the business and social life of corporate bodies and individuals who due to the restiveness of the area are making serious adjustments to preserve their lives. This also has dire economic consequences for the nation. Also, the militants who are usually young persons and are supposed to form the active workforce of the nation or undertake studies in knowledge and skills acquisition are obviously in the battle field. With all of the mentioned effects of the Niger Delta saga on both the region and the nation, it is apparent that there is the possibility of death of the system if appropriate measures are not considered. Therefore, attention must be paid to the core antecedents of the crisis and a sustainable approach is offered to clamp on its lethal consequences and further restore homeostasis and quality of life.

2. Rapid establishment of rapport and therapeutic relationship: The Niger Delta militants are not faceless and thus could be reached. They have equally stated their demands with their priorities on ecological attention, fair resource distribution, implementation of the proceeds of the 2014 national conference, fair corruption trials and inclusive governance (Ukwu, 2016). This clearly shows that they could be engaged in a rapport and further made to have an established relationship. An established relationship would provide for more information that would be responsible for an understanding of the length and breadth of the crisis at hand. The issue becomes the extent to which the relationship turns out to be truly therapeutic. The government as the leading conflict resolution party at this stage must ensure that transparency becomes a virtue, with discipline and commitment fostering the implementation of compromise reached. Politicizing the relationship would definitely be a cog in the wheel. The extent to which the relationship is valued by the government, would definitely facilitate the positive response of the militants, especially when efforts are being made to understand them and impeccable attention offered to their demands.

3. Identify dimensions of presenting problems: The stated demands of the militants clearly put forward the

presenting problems of the region. In social work, it is advised that a background check is always done to check if the presenting problem differs from the real or actual problem which could be the precipitating events of the crisis (Ngwu, 2015). Given the Niger Delta saga, dimensions of the presenting problems as stated by the Niger Delta Avengers (Ukwu, 2016) largely involve economic and political implications. Probing questions should suffice here for parties involved so as to clearly understand positions and consequences for actions. The government follows quickly, through running a cost-benefit analysis that will help ascertain implications for compromise and interventions. The aim of this stage is to clarify covert and overt issues.

4. Explore feelings and actions: This stage is usually more perceptive. This would help significant bodies involved in the crisis to understand the reasons behind their present feelings and actions and the necessary conditions that must be satisfied to change them. At the dialogue table, parties must reach a consensus regarding conditions for remedies so as to avoid relapse. Therefore, the government, militants and other affected bodies must conclude on those therapeutic conditions after carefully and collectively embarking on a cost-benefit analysis of choices flowing from the previous stage. Having a humane approach is very key to the success of the stage.

5. Generate and explore alternatives: A very important reason that occasions the failure of most policies and programmes in Nigeria, is because of the top-bottom approach government usually takes as against a people centred bottom-top approach (Ezeh, 1999). Alternatives suffice as solutions to the crisis and this should not exclusively be determined by the government. The militants and other representatives of the Niger Delta should be accorded respect as stakeholders and allowed the leverage to make suggestions that would remedy their plights. Technical committees are equally necessary, but that should not cloud the direct suggestions of more direct victims of the crisis. It will be suggestive to allow the militants and other Niger Delta representatives an upper hand in proffering alternatives while the Nigerian government plays technical roles and oversight in reconciling the possible implementation of suggested alternatives to the benefits of the State.

6. Implement an action plan: After alternatives have been reviewed and an action plan has been formulated, implementation comes next. It is at this stage where policies and programmes in Nigeria usually hit the rock. This could be fundamentally traced to lack of commitment, transparency and accountability in getting the said done. It is very important that those designated to carry out the demands of this stage have a strong reputation for

commitment and accountability. They should as well consider the inclusion of native hands to give the feeling of 'our' and not 'their'. Politicizing this stage would definitely impede on the expected outcomes and would also set in the possibility of relapse. Designated ministries and agencies charged with this responsibility must be monitored by an independent body or better still, an independent body bearing the features of decency, commitment, nativity and accountability should be set up to drive the implementation to the very last. Targets must be set and constantly monitored with feedbacks being returned by the victims of the crisis intermittently.

7. Establish a follow-up plan and agreement: After implementing the action plan, follow-up plans must be made alongside agreements that will consolidate deadlines for target. Follow-up plans would largely involve monitoring agencies, media reports of progress and feedbacks from parties affected by the crisis. This stage would continue and be sustained, until it can be guaranteed that the possibility of a relapse into the crisis is completely eroded.

7. Conclusion

Crisis, though an inevitable part of human existence can be challenged and prevented as scientifically proven (Dix & Smith, 2009). It affects not just individuals but systems. It is a threat to homeostasis, quality of life and equilibrium. Therefore, because of the disadvantages it portends, it has become an object of study that could be theorized. This has given birth to the crisis intervention theory and model as discussed extensively in this paper. While the theory explains conditions for crisis, the model variant of it establishes a practical remedy that could be used in remedying and circumventing crisis. To bring this to bear, the Niger Delta crisis has been made to fit into the applicability of crisis intervention as a theory and as a model. This has given the possibility of dealing decisively with the unrest in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria until traces of resurgence are no more. To this end, the far reaching advantages of the crisis intervention theory and model to the social work profession and social engineering become undisputed and expedient for the growth and development of crisis victims.

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