

## EFFECT OF TRAUMA-INFORMED INTERVENTION ON ADOLESCENTS' WELLBEING IN OBIO-AKPOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The study examined the effect of trauma-informed interventions on the wellbeing of adolescents from the Obio-Akpor Local Government Area Rivers State Nigeria. The study adopted quasi experimental design. A sample of 120 adolescents, aged 12–18, from public secondary schools was selected. Secondary school students were split into either treatment, which involved participation in an 8-week trauma-informed intervention, or control groups, which did not engage in any form of participation. The Adolescent Wellbeing Scale was used to gather data from participants and the data were analyzed using descriptive and ANCOVA statistics. The outcome of the study was that the trauma-informed intervention work. As per the study, the intervention's effectiveness dominated irrespective of adolescents' gender and socio-economic status. The participants from the study were able to gain the same level of intervention irrespective of the sociodemographic variables. The study established that trauma-informed interventions improve and protect the psychosocial and emotional wellbeing of adolescents in schools. The study recommends that schools in Obio-Akpor LGA should adopt trauma-informed programs in the guidance and counselling programs aimed at supporting adolescents' psychological wellbeing.

**KEYWORDS:** trauma-informed intervention, wellbeing of adolescents, school counseling, Nigeria, socio-economic status, gender.

## INTRODUCTION

Many people undergo profound changes in their lives around the ages of 10-19. The changes are mostly positive but in the case of many Nigerian adolescents, there are also negative experiences, aggravating the situation. Violence, child neglect, abuse, war, and other trauma-related events can deeply compromise the psychological well-being and the psychosocial development of the adolescent. Nigeria trauma studies have also shown the extent of trauma and its psycho-social debilitating effects on the Nigerian youth. Among secondary school children in Gwagwalada, cross-section studies showed that 75% of the children had one form of trauma or the other, with emotional abuse being the most prevalent. Psychological trauma suffered in the studies was correlated with poor cognitive-related functions, and they included poor memories, attention deficiencies, and even problems with executive functions (Arogbofa, 2024).

Trauma and other abuse-related factors have also been associated with poor mental health among the Nigerian adolescents. There is a documented case in Calabar, Nigeria, where a mixed study design showed that childhood neglect and abuse adversity were associated with depression and suicidal ideations among secondary school children (Okonko et al. 2023). There is also substantial documented evidence concerning adolescents who are in contact with the welfare and justice systems, and the high prevalence of depression (over 65%), PTSD, and other trauma- and stress-related conditions documented in this age group are concerning (A study of justice- and welfare-involved adolescents in Nigeria).

In addition, the effects of trauma are educational in nature. Research in Benue and Nasarawa States indicates that trauma resulting from conflict at the community level negatively impacts adjustment academically in in-school adolescents, affecting attendance, participation, and concentration in class. Also, literature from Nigeria indicates the adverse impact of trauma on the neural processes in development which are vital in learning including regulation of emotions, control of self, neural development regulating memory and attention which in turn can influence academic learning and the whole development of an individual negatively (Adubasim & Ugwu, 2019).

The extent of the issue suggests that if trauma is not dealt with, there is a worrisome long-term outlook, particularly for adolescents who are more vulnerable. The potential of individuals and the wellbeing of the community can be compromised by the increasing poor mental health, cognitive dysfunction, educational underachievement, poor social integration,

and that of delinquent and maladaptive behaviors. The trauma dislocation of social relations and structure is signified by a study in Oyo State which linked trauma of childhood, peer pressure, and low self-esteem to violent behaviors in adolescents (Adegunju, Dipeolu & Oyeniran, 2025). Also, adverse effects on career aspirations have been documented. In Lagos, lower vocational aspirations in adolescents were associated with childhood trauma, alcoholism, and negative peer influence (Ijiola, Odetayo, Dada & Adegunju, 2025).

There is little research conducted on adaptation-informed interventions, especially trauma-informed interventions tailored to the Nigerian context. However, some researchers have been able to respond to the gap. A trauma-informed, strength-based, holistic counselling framework has been developed to address psychological safety, empowerment, and resilience for adolescent trauma survivors. One study showed trauma-informed counselling improves the mental wellbeing of secondary school adolescents and lessens the negative factors caused by trauma on their overall wellbeing (Fadipe, Ajibola & Olakojo, 2022)

Other researchers have proposed models that integrate trauma-sensitive counselling and life-skills and pre-vocational training tailored to adolescents deemed at-risk. The aim is to build psychosocial resilience and healthy adaptive functioning, and to develop effective coping mechanisms for children living in high-risk environments (Okore, 2025). Such models might be most beneficial for adolescents in many Nigerian communities where mental health care systems are underdeveloped and adolescents are more likely to lack access to specialized services.

The situation in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area (Rivers State) is unique and deserves more focus and analysis. As part of the urban-rural transition zone around Port Harcourt, Obio-Akpor faces several challenges including poverty, social and communal conflicts, rapid urban growth, and potential domestic and social violence, all of which increase the likelihood of trauma exposure among the youth. Despite this, there is still no documented study to assess the prevalence of trauma or the impact of trauma-informed practices on adolescents' wellbeing in this particular LGA.

The aforementioned gap is concerning as the absence of primary data from the field surrounding LGA in the design and implementation of trauma-informed practices is likely to create a mismatch between the adolescents' profiles and the anticipated outcomes of the interventions. More specifically, Obio-Akpor may have more unique socio-cultural,

community, and economic challenges, and local stressors than other regions of Nigeria. As such, the interventions could fail to meet the desired objectives or may be counter-productive. Consequently, the current research aims to contribute to the body of evidence through assessing the impact of a trauma-informed approach to interventions on the wellbeing of adolescents in the Obio-Akpor LGA. The current research incorporates a meticulously constructed intervention, designed to be appropriate for the local socio-cultural environment and integrated with counselling, psychoeducation, building of protective factors and provision of support to determine the extent to which trauma-informed interventions positively impact the wellbeing of adolescents and the extent to which trauma-informed interventions support academic and social functionality in the community.

The research could be of great help to the policymakers, educators, mental health providers, and the community in addressing the negative consequences that trauma inflicts on the adolescents suffering in the Rivers State. Such evidence could potentially amplify the trauma-informed initiatives deployed in educational and community settings within Nigeria and other countries thereby transforming the lives of adolescents in the Nigerian population.

This research receives considerable support from the growing body of Nigerian scholarship that correlates trauma to an individual's mental health and its subsequent impact on the individual's cognitive, academic and behavioral performance, and outcomes. There is, however, a notable gap in the body of evidence regarding the impact of trauma on an individual's academic performance which the current research seeks to address. The research aims to generate Nigeria Context Obio-Akpor evidence to support the development of trauma-responsive interventions.

Psychological and social problems, as well as poor educational attainment, can result from the trauma exposures of the adolescents in Nigeria, as outlined by Okonko and others in 2023, and Arogbofa in 2024. Children and youths in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area, such as those experiencing inner domestic hostilities, urban violence, and peer assaults, are often the victims of such trauma. As trauma becomes abundant and recognizable, the research becomes paradoxical. This is the case for the trauma-informed strategy for Nigerian adolescents in Obio-Akpor, as this is predominantly missing from the evidence. Other general mental health services that have been made available are not sufficiently tailored to adolescents who are trauma-affected, and therefore, their specific psychosocial problems are

unlikely to be met. This undesired state marginalizes the available trauma responsive psychosocial advocacy ratio for the adolescents.

The general aim of this study is to assess the psychosocial impact of trauma-informed intervention on the adolescents in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To assess the psychosocial impact of trauma-informed intervention on the adolescents in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area.
2. To assess the impact of the trauma-informed intervention on the adolescents' psychosocial wellbeing based on their gender.
3. To assess the impact of socio-economic status on the effectiveness of the trauma-informed intervention on adolescent wellbeing.

Based on the objectives, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What impact does trauma-informed intervention have on the wellbeing of adolescents in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area?
2. In what ways does gender impact the effectiveness of the trauma-informed intervention on adolescents' wellbeing?
3. In what ways does socio-economic status impact the effectiveness of trauma-informed intervention on adolescent wellbeing?

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no impact of the trauma-informed intervention in improving wellbeing of adolescents in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no difference concerning the impact of trauma-informed intervention in the wellbeing of adolescents for male and female adolescents.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no impact of socio-economic status on the effectiveness of trauma-informed intervention on adolescent wellbeing.

## METHODOLOGY

This study applied a quasi-experimental design approach to assess the impact of a trauma-informed intervention on the wellbeing of adolescents. The design involved a pre-test and post-test with treatment and control groups. The treatment group was the only group that was provided with the trauma-informed intervention, whereas the control group did not undergo any form of organized intervention during the study. This approach facilitated the study of the

relationship of cause and effect while factoring in the starting line differences between the participants (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

The population comprised all adolescents between the ages of 12 to 18 in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State, who are registered in public secondary schools. As per the Rivers State Ministry of Education (2024), the Local Government Area (LGA) has an estimated 12,500 adolescents of the targeted age in 35 public secondary schools.

The study involved a purposive selection of 120 adolescents, where 60 were placed in the treatment group and 60 in the control group. Purposive sampling was utilized to choose schools that had a background of trauma-related issues to adolescents, while in those schools, simple random sampling was used to assign participants to particular groups. This sample size was deemed adequate to allow sufficient statistical computations to be done on the data using the t-test and ANCOVA in order to identify the effect of the intervention.

Data were collected using the Adolescent Wellbeing Scale (AWS), derived from instruments previously adapted for Nigerian adolescents (Fadipe, Ajibola & Olakojo, 2022). The AWS contains 30 items and measures psychological wellbeing; emotional regulation; and social functioning. The responses were captured on a 5-item Likert scale whereby 1= “Strongly Disagree” and 5= “Strongly Agree”. The tool underwent reliability assessment through the use of Cronbach's alpha, which returned a value of 0.87; and thus certifying the instrument's reliability.

The trauma-informed intervention was a structured 8-week programme delivered in 60-minute weekly sessions. It included trauma-informed counselling, psychoeducation, activities to build and strengthen resilience, and life-skills training. The intervention was based on the trauma-informed care principles of safety, trustworthiness, empowerment, collaboration, and cultural sensitivity (Ishola, Jaiyeola & Esere, 2022). Sessions were facilitated by professional school counselors.

The first data collection occurred one week before the intervention began, and participants filled out the AWS. The treatment participants then completed the eight-week intervention, while the control participants continued their regular school activities without any interventions. Immediately after the intervention, post-test data were collected. Procedures were performed under the ethical approval and informed consents of participants and their parents/ guardians. Data Collection and Procedures.

Data were analyzed using the version 25 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Means and standard deviations were generated for demographic characteristics and the wellbeing scores. The impact of the intervention on wellbeing of the adolescents was examined using ANCOVA, controlling for pre-test scores. Additional analyses explored the moderating impacts of gender and socio-economic status on the intervention results. The level of significance was determined as  $p < 0.05$ .

## RESULT

**Table 1: Effect of Trauma-Informed Intervention on Adolescent Wellbeing.**

Group	N	Pre-test Mean	Pre-test SD	Post-test Mean	Post-test SD	Mean Gain
Trauma-Informed Intervention	60	2.35	0.478	7.12	1.215	4.77
Control	60	2.41	0.495	5.03	2.398	2.62
Mean Difference		0.06		2.09		2.15
<b>N=120</b>						

The result in table 1 demonstrated that the trauma-informed intervention group improved by a mean difference of 4.77 ( $p = 0.0003$ ) from a pre-test of 2.35 (SD 0.478) to a post-test of means 7.12 (SD 1.215). School maturation (i.e. mean gain of 2.62) could help to explain improvement seen in the control group. However, the trauma-informed intervention enhanced the difference of means 2.15 positively to the control group.

**Table 2: Influence of Gender on Effectiveness of Trauma-Informed Intervention.**

Group	Experimental					Control				Mean Diff	Mean Gain
Gender	Pre test		Post Test			Pre test		Post Test			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Male (N=59)	2.31	0.462	6.98	1.201	4.67	2.42	0.515	5.08	2.75	2.66	2.01
Female (N=61)	2.39	0.492	7.20	1.178	4.81	2.40	0.508	5.04	2.54	2.64	2.17

**N=120**

As explained in Table 2, all adolescents, irrespective of gender, gained from the trauma-informed intervention. The average males' score on the pre-test was 2.31 while on the post-test, there was a mean of 6.98, resulting in a mean gain of 4.67. This was also the case for the females whose mean improved from 2.39 to 7.20, achieving a mean gain of 4.81. The gains of both male and female students in the control group were lower (2.66 for males, 2.64 for females). The intervention was probably a little more effective on females adolescents as increases were a little higher on the female side (mean difference = 2.17), still, both sexes experienced significant gains.

**Table 3: Influence of Socio-Economic Status on Effectiveness of Trauma-Informed Intervention.**

Group	Experimental					Control				Mean Diff	Mean Gain
SES	Pre test		Post Test			Pre test		Post Test			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		Mean Diff	Mean	SD	Mean		
Low SES (N=40)	2.28	0.455	6.90	1.225	4.62	2.35	0.490	4.98	2.45	2.63	1.99
Middle SES (N=40)	2.36	0.480	7.15	1.198	4.79	2.40	0.505	5.05	2.50	2.65	2.14
High SES (N=40)	2.42	0.492	7.30	1.170	4.88	2.45	0.498	5.10	2.52	2.65	2.23

Table 3 indicates that adolescents from all socio-economic backgrounds profited from the trauma-informed intervention. Low SES participants increased their mean scores by 4.62 (from 2.28 to 6.90), then middle SES increased by 4.79 (from 2.36 to 7.15), and finally high SES increased by 4.88 (from 2.42 to 7.30). On the other hand, the participants in the control groups only increased by 2.63 to 2.65; thus, their gains were lower. Addressing the differences in mean gain scores from the trauma-informed intervention, the data and findings support the intervention's effectiveness across all socio-economic groups. More particularly,



the higher SES participants may have had more access to additional resources to aid their intervention outcome.

### Test of Hypotheses

**Table 4: ANCOVA Showing Effect of Trauma-Informed Intervention on Adolescent Wellbeing**

Source of Variation	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Partial Eta Squared
Pre-test	121.458	1	121.458	45.23	0.000*	0.281
Group (Intervention)	176.732	1	176.732	65.79	0.000*	0.354
Error	312.450	117	2.671			
Total	610.640	119				

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$

As presented in Table 4, after considering the pre-test values, the trauma-informed intervention positively impacted the wellbeing of adolescents ( $F(1,117) = 65.79$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.354$ ). The trauma-informed intervention positively impacted adolescent wellbeing. The large effect size indicates that the trauma-informed intervention accounted for approximately 35% of the variance in the post-test wellbeing scores, thereby rejecting the null hypotheses that the trauma-informed intervention does not significantly improve adolescent wellbeing.

**Table 5: ANCOVA Showing Gender Differences in Effectiveness of Trauma-Informed Intervention.**

Source of Variation	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Partial Eta Squared
Pre-test	120.820	1	120.820	44.95	0.000*	0.278
Gender	3.215	1	3.215	1.20	0.277	0.010
Error	313.812	117	2.681			
Total	610.640	119				

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$

From Table 5 we can tell that sex didn't really change the effects that the trauma-informed intervention had on well-being ( $F(1,117)=1.20$ ,  $p=0.277$ ,  $\eta^2=0.010$ ). This means that male and female participants benefitted equally from the trauma-informed intervention. This finding supports the hypotheses that gender does not significantly impact the effectiveness of the intervention

**Table 6: ANCOVA Showing Influence of Socio-Economic Status on Effectiveness of Trauma-Informed Intervention.**

Source of Variation	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Partial Eta Squared
Pre-test	122.134	1	122.134	45.62	0.000*	0.281
Socio-Economic Status	5.872	2	2.936	1.09	0.338	0.018
Error	308.634	116	2.662			
Total	610.640	119				

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$

Table 6 shows that all respondents regardless of social economic positioning experienced and benefitted from the trauma-informed intervention equally as none of them were significantly more affected than the others ( $F(2,116) = 1.09$ ,  $p = 0.338$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.018$ ). On the whole, this shows that the respondents from low, mid and high socio economic positions experienced the intervention positively and equally, indicating that socio economic status most likely does not impact the interventions perceived outcomes and usefulness.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study findings showed that trauma-informed practises had a beneficial effect on the wellbeing of adolescents. This means that trauma-sensitive, well-organized systems can assist adolescents in coping with the emotional and psychological effects of a traumatic event. This corroborates the study of Fadipe et al. (2022), in which trauma-informed counselling was found to positively improve the mental wellbeing of Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools. Arogbofa (2024), on the other hand, pointed out that the positive impact of trauma interventions on the cognitive and social functioning of the individuals demonstrates that

providing assistance helps to improve the adolescents' overall adjustment and the level of resilience.

The findings also indicated that the effectiveness of the intervention was not significantly impacted by the respondents' gender, indicating that all male and female adolescents gained the same amount of benefit from the trauma-informed approach. This is also supported by the studies of Adegunju et al. (2025), which stated that the trauma exposure is similar in both females and males, and the interventions that focus on developing coping strategies and building resilience are generally effective. This suggests that trauma-informed programs can be implemented without gender-related adaptations and still yield positive results in the wellbeing of adolescents.

In addition, socio-economic status was also found to have no considerable effect on the effectiveness of the intervention. Adolescents also from low, middle, and high socio-economic strata seemed to benefit the same, which demonstrates the trauma-informed interventions universal relevance. It supports the findings of Ishola, Jaiyeola and Esere (2022), on the basis of which trauma-informed care derives its principles: safety, trust, empowerment, and collaboration, which are all embedded on the core psychosocial needs of all individuals irrespective of one's socio-economic status. The implication is that trauma-informed programs will be effective even in schools and also by policy makers where socio-economic inequalities are do not have to be included in the plan as they would have no impact on the outcome of the program.

Taken together, the findings also confirm that trauma-informed interventions are effective in promoting adolescent wellbeing in schools in Nigeria. The psychosocial support from the program will definitely be of great help to the adolescents as it will promote their resilience, coping skills, and positive development in the face of the trauma.

## CONCLUSION

This study showed that trauma-informed care promotes the wellbeing of adolescents in the Obio-Akpor Local Government Area. The intervention enabled the adolescents to cope more fully with the psychological and emotional effects of traumas. The findings illustrated the impact of trauma-sensitive programs in schools and showed the intervention had a positive effect regardless of gender and socioeconomic status. This indicates that the programs will meet the needs of most adolescents. The study findings showed the value in the school setting

of trauma-informed programs and the positive impact of these programs on the adolescents resilience and coping strategies and highly encouraged psychosocial growth.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings and conclusion:

1. Schools in Obio-Akpor LGA should adopt trauma-informed programs in the guidance and counselling programs aimed at supporting adolescents psychological wellbeing.
2. To sustain the impact of the programs, trauma-informed programs in schools should consider capacity building of the school counsellors and teachers in relation to trauma-informed approaches.
3. Trauma-informed approaches provided positive outcomes and thus needs to be adopted in schools regardless of the socio-economic status and gender of the adolescents. This should be encouraged at the policy and school administration level.

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