

Is Transcendental Healing of Painful Memories Possible? A Reflection on the Role of Pastoral Counselling and Storytelling

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the contributions of pastoral counselling and storytelling in healing and restoring painful memories. The study applies Louw's life story and Lartey's relationship-oriented models as the theoretical framework. The data were collected through participant observation, document analysis, and the researchers' long years of experience in pastoral ministry and counselling. The finding reveals that storytelling remains a powerful tool for healing wounded memories. Hence, pastoral counselling and storytelling create a safe space for seekers to interact, found emotional strength to reignite healing processes, reclaim their volition and create retrospection that reconnects the healing seekers with their painful memories. The study recommends that government should prioritise memory healing programmes, partner with the church, chiefs and relevant organisations through sponsorship, provide counselling centres for hurting men to voice out and seek healing in their communities, regulate churches, and reduce violence shown on the South African media in the name of telling our stories or entertainment.

KEYWORDS: unresolved bitterness; brokenness; painful memories; trauma; addictions; woundedness; group support therapy; Journey of healing

I. INTRODUCTION

The human being is storytelling being and storytelling is part and parcel of human nature. It helps humans traverse life's complex social problems. Those telling stories allow for the opportunity to practice, through their own recreation, human problem-solving skills. Storytelling is essentially an African communication and understanding form of oral tradition, informal education and folktales. This study's literature highlights the crime statistics of the last decade and blames the crime increase on the painful memories of South Africa's past history. This study examines how storytelling enhances individual and group learning as a powerful instrument of healing for the abused, traumatized, addicts and those hunted by painful memories of the past through pastoral counselling. This article draws from a qualitative study conducted for the fulfilment of a master's degree in Ministerial Studies/Practical Theology from the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The purpose of this study is to seek and evaluate storytelling in pastoral counselling *vis-a-vis* the healing process of wounded memories in a society with proliferated philosophies, perceptions and perspectives. South African society remains racially divided with elements of hatred, domestic violence, political instability, capitalism, xenophobia, homophobia and patriarchy that have left many broken. As such, this study addresses the key question of *How do storytelling and pastoral counselling contribute toward the healing of a painful past or memories?* To answer the question two sub-research questions were developed. These include *how does storytelling contribute toward the healing of a painful past?* *What is the role of pastoral counselling in the healing of painful memories?* The significance of this study includes the expectation that it would contribute to the strategic search on how to resolve the skyrocketing drug and alcohol addiction, increasing level of hate, "streetkidsm" or "para", domestic violence, crime, broken homes and relationships, suicide and xenophobic attacks in South Africa (Atwoli 2015; African Check 2017). These traverses tend to undermine the effort to overturn crime, uplift the mental health and human development index (HDI) in the country (Okoye & Mensah 2021). The study is expected to contribute to the existing literature on promoting pastoral counselling and the healing of painful memories in the developing nations of the world.

II. LITERATURE

The Institute for Security Studies (ISS – September 2014) has indicated an alarming increase in crimes in South Africa from 2012 to 2017 and beyond (Africa Check 2017). The 16,259 incidents of murder in 2012/13, have increased drastically to 17,068 murders in 2013/14 (ISS 2014). In 2015/16, exactly 18,673 murder incidents were recorded which amounted to a 4.9% increase from the 2014/15 record. The rate of murder has increased from 32.9 in 2014/15 to 33.9 in 2015/16 (Africa Check 2017). These numbers were steadily increasing, and many people ascribe such escalating crime rise to poverty and the legacy of the country's political past (SSA 2021). The rate of reported sexual crimes was recorded as 62,649 cases in 2013/14, although slightly lower than its highest rate in 2008/9 which recorded 70,514 cases (ISS 2014). Although it was not clear whether the crime declined or victims were too scared to report cases or incidents which is arguably the questions lingering or came to mind. The number of aggravated robberies increased from 105,888 cases in 2012/13 to 119,351 cases in 2013/14, which shows a 12.7% increase with extra 13,463 cases in the following year (SSA 2021). In evaluating and analysing all these alarming increases in crime statistics, the ISS reckons that social factors which influence crime and violence include the high levels of inequality along with the normalisation of violence in homes, neighbourhoods, media and schools (ISS 2014). Sequel to the country's alarming crime rates, the rate of suicide has enormously increased to rank the country with the eighth-highest suicide rate globally. According to the SA Federation for Mental Health (2014), out of the one million suicides that were recorded globally, South Africa has approximately 8000 suicides a year. The research conducted by the Depression and Anxiety Support Group (DASG) as published in *Health 24* (2014) indicates that one in five teens thinks about harming themselves in South Africa over the slightest stress. Such that 34% of black youth have thought of using suicide as an option in responding to stressful life situations such as divorce (of their parents), relationship conflict, academic underperformance, and general life difficulties (Africa Check 2017). The trauma associated with criminal behaviour can affect how victims view themselves, their world and their relationships (Hill 2003: v). Hence, the victims of crimes live with painful and traumatic memories which continue to manifest various psychotic behaviour in them (Atwoli 2015). In that way, crime is recycled or perpetuated in the society of South Africa (SSA 2021). Non-governmental organisations have been at the forefront in fighting the possible consequences of sad memories. The church too has been hands-on with pastoral care and counselling. Storytelling remains a major tool as it creates a listening atmosphere that generates support and psychologically therapeutic scenario that tends to remind seekers that they are not alone irrespective of how awful a life-challenging situation presents itself (Miller 2011:1). This gives credence to the significance of pastoral care, counselling, and emotional healing in post-apartheid South Africa.

PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELLING IN THE HEALING PROCESS: Pastoral care and pastoral counselling have been considered synonymous and the same time different (Onwuegbuchulam 2016). The two have a common purpose for the human souls or void (Stansbury 2012). Although the contemporary arguments consider them distinct such that pastoral counselling is part or branch of pastoral care (Olajede 2014). Everly (2000) argues that pastoral care includes clerical functions aimed at guiding and sustaining a congregation. Whilst pastoral counselling is a narrowed clerical role of ministering to an individual in need through the application of special (or learned) skills. The former is likened to a general practitioner while the latter is likened to a specialist, a counsellor (Ezenwanne & Mitchell 2015). Lartey (2003:30) expresses that the essential elements of pastoral care are means of helping people gain relief from the crisis. Hence, pastoral care training and practice recognise a transcendent dimension of human life through which relief and coping mechanisms are communicated (Moyo 2014). The theologians and development specialists recommend that partnership between the government and non-governmental organisations should be considered towards providing effective pastoral care and counselling to optimise effective and empathic support (Lee 2010, Bojuwoye & Sodi 2010, Miller 2011).

HEALING OF PAINFUL MEMORIES THROUGH STORYTELLING: Horsdal (2012) acknowledges that telling one's painful story to others in a safe environment can open up a journey of healing. For instance, the telling of one's story of woundedness to a person in a safe environment opens the door to a journey of healing that leads to a better life, solution finding which is mentally and psychologically therapeutic (Moyo 2014:5). In Matthew 18 verses 19 to 20, the Scripture also emphasises that where two or three people have gathered in my name, I (i.e., God) am there in their midst. This implies that the vision of problem-solving, prayer, spirituality and heaven is a vision of community and sharing (Matt. 6: 9—13). The gathering and sharing of worship, testimonies, discussions and listening to one another do not merely bring opportunities for reconciliation, psychological healing process and power of forgiveness to an individual but also have a spiritual undertone that rehabilitates and uplifts the soul (Matt. 18: 19—20). Support groups and pastoral counselling opportunities enable victims of abuse, and crime among others not to forget, cover, and bury the pains, but to cope or manage the pains toward redeeming the painful past (Vorster 2014b). The church plays a significant role in the process through pastoral initiatives and support components (Lee 2010, Onwuegbuchulam 2016).

III. THEORETICAL FRAMING

Louw's Life Story (or Narrative), and Lartey's relationship-oriented models were the theoretical frameworks adopted by the study. Louw's theory prioritises telling and listening to personal experience as the basis of understanding and dealing with the individual (Louw 2000:309). Personal experience encompasses the life experiences an individual finds interesting in his/her real-world interactions. Louw's model acknowledges that individuals live within a distinctive context linked to specific events that influence his/her life (2000:309). The storytelling approach explores a painful experience of the victim(s) in which the trained personnel facilitates the healing procedures that enable the victims or seekers to connect with themselves (2000: 32). This process helps the victim(s) to acknowledge the source(s) of their brokenness and pain, build a trustful within and amongst seekers that creates in them a nourishing and joyful relationship with themselves and God (2000:33). According to Louw, this process is practical and works with the mental faculty of the wounded (2000).

Lartey's relationship-oriented model is the second framework utilised by the study and it focuses on the renewal of relationships (Lartey 2003:86). Lartey's relationship-oriented model reckons that we are relational beings (Lartey 2003:84) such that human crises arise and escalates when these relationships are broken. Hence, when we start building this relationship within and outside a person but with persons that share similar worldview and trained personnel, things start fixing themselves out mentally and psychologically (Lartey 2003). This framework encourages the regeneration of human interpersonal relationships bearing in mind that a human person is a relational being (2003:84). Lartey's model reinforces the significance of restoring communal support systems where individuals relate to a community of persons with similar context, goal and prevailing circumstances (Lartey 2003). In the African context, communal living and sharing are resourceful while seeking support outside oneself is considered befitting and releasing (Lapsley 2014). This model or framework enables a pre-established background or parameter that allows the data analysed in a communal-relationship context. Thus, using pastoral counselling through the support-group workshop is a different kind of relationship that convey to seekers the journey of healing.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts the qualitative approach using an exploratory approach through interpretivist inquiry. The interpretivist inquiry is whereby the researcher(s) interpret what is written, read, seen and understood through the researchers' backgrounds, history, contexts and frameworks (Creswell 2009:17). The exploratory variables seek new information and assume the study is relatively a new area of inquiry (Van Vyck 2012). Document analysis, participant observation of various support group workshops attended by the researcher and the researcher's long years of experience in pastoral ministry and counselling were combined to gather relevant information. These three methods were used to triangulate the information and data obtained through the study. Document analysis represents a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents of both printed and electronic (computer-based and internet-transmitted) materials such as mission statements, vision and *modus operandi* (Bowen 2009). In this study document analysis allows the collection of data from written sources, spoken language, participant observations of relevant healing workshops and electronic review of support group video clips (Van Vyck 2012). Participant observation enables the researcher to compare the practice to the contents of evaluated documents. The researcher also gathers information by drawing from a personal experience and endeavours in pastoral training, ministerial theology and counselling, as well as his interaction with the victims of emotional brokenness. Thematic content analysis was employed to analyse and sequentially present collected data. The ethical approval was secured from the University of KwaZulu-Natal ethical council before embarking on the project. The major limitation of this study is being bound by the ethics of confidentiality of both the university ethics committee and that of the healing organisations to keep particular information classified (i.e., even when the researcher is granted access to the information, yet the information gathered would not be displayed as part of data presentation) since certain information was reserved for a category of trained staff, personnel or executives. This limitation led to the information being displayed in this report being more of a document analysis and a summarised version of workshop outcomes through a thematic analysis. Knowing that this is a very sensitive zone/topic, the researcher strictly adhered to the ethical instructions by the ethical authorities of the university and those of the individual organisations consulted. The researcher succeeded in relaying the information gathered using the interpretivist approach (Creswell 2009).

V. LIMITATIONS

The content of the stories from the group-sharing outcomes or the data obtained through participants' observation vis-à-vis pastoral counselling contents are not allowed to be presented in this article or in any platform given the specification of the ethical requirements of the various organisations sampled. However, the study found a systematic and generic way to present the information without being direct or exposing any of the stories verbatim given the ethical requirements.

FINDING: Using the sub-research questions the finding has two sections (A and B). SECTION A, responds to the sub-question: *how does storytelling contribute toward the healing of a painful past?* The following themes emanated:

a) DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF ONE’S CRISIS: it happens during and after normal stressful transitions in one’s life’s journey such as birth, puberty, adolescence, marriage, examination, menopause, divorce, retirement etc. (Health 24 2014). Storytelling tends to ease the level of anxiety without which human beings may not be able to understand certain things about their lives as Paul puts it:

... I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. I do not understand my actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate ... I can do what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do ... (Romans 7:14-25, NRSV).

Saint Paul knew, as a human being he is prone to sin even against his wish, yet Paul also knows the power of sharing his feelings and predicaments. In other words, a problem shared is a problem solved as sharing calms human brokenness (Moyo 2014). Every human person is in some ways like all others, like some others and like no other (Lartey 2003:171). In reality, a problem or challenge gets easier when shared, as the fear and feeling of being alone makes the problem unbearable; this is a law in nature. The same law of nature applies to sharing stressful and painful memories or experiences with others (sharing one’s crisis unavoidably creates moments of transitions, passages, growth and development (Denis 2011 a).

b) FACILITATES THE POSSIBILITY OF HEALING PAINFUL MEMORIES: experience has shown that even though human events may be forgotten, most often the painful human experiences are still remembered and can subsequently evoke bitter emotions repeatedly (Denis 2011a: 7). The need for the healing of memories recognises that our life is miserable when we continue living under the influence and control of painful memories (Okeke 2017). Often time, humans tend to suppress the remembering of painful emotions intentionally or unintentionally but continue to suffer the consequences of such suppressed emotions because they are not healed (Ward 2014). Like energy which cannot be destroyed, painful memories can only be converted into normal ones through storytelling counselling and support group processes.

c) PROVIDES CREATIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO TACKLE BITTERNESS AND ANGER IN FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS: in the South African context, the bitterness, anger or rage of apartheid will take time to be extinguished (Vorster 2014b). Creative ways of telling our painful stories on media determine the headway toward the healing of the brokenness hearts, families and human relationships, the circle of abuses, violence and social inequalities that currently permeate South African society. For instance, the Kumbuluekhaya TV programme helps in finding close family members displaced by the legacy of the past.

d) ADDICTION: overcoming drug and alcohol addiction requires a support group, healing workshops and counselling sessions which cannot be possible without storytelling. The victims of bitter memories clung to addiction as a form of solace or ‘coping’ mechanism (Health 24 2014). Addiction impairs the power of volition as described:

a man or woman whose power to exercise rational volition has been seriously eroded by drugs [alcohol], and whose life is instead organised largely – even exclusively – around the pursuit and satisfaction of his [her] addiction (quoted in Schaler 2000:3).

(e) DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: domestic violence remains the greatest cause of breaking relationships in South Africa and beyond (SSA 2021). Just as children from violent homes internalised violence; as such they are prone to continue perpetuating violence thereby creating a cycle of stress and victimisation (Nasimiyu-Wasike 2000:131). As women and children pay the biggest price, storytelling goes a long way in creating awareness that translates into bitterness-combating policies and healing capacity and strategies (2000:120). Storytelling brings together the perpetrators and victims of emotional pain and traumatic experiences into memories-healing experiences (Field 2008:150).

(f) RESTORATION OF MORALITY: Gallagher (2006:328) indicated that morality ‘is never a blind’ where the truth is exposed. Thus, ‘morality’ and human conscience die a natural death where storytelling is omitted or relegated to nothingness. To get healed from brokenness, the ardent need to rebuild and regain our sense of morality, values, and sacredness becomes a sinequanon (2006: 328). Storytelling becomes a vehicle that carries this phenomenon on a larger scale through healing workshops, counselling and support group (Ward 2014). Thus, the story shared by seekers is nothing but the truth. Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth and the life...*” (Jn 14:6) whenever light appears, the darkness vanishes immediately.

(g) STORYTELLING SUSTAINS HEALING PROCESS AND MIRACLE: Ward (2014), acknowledges that the healing process takes time, one needs 'patience and persistence'. In the middle of the emptiness and nothingness that were created by sad memories or traumatic experiences one needs to buy time, have the mind stimulated and energy of his or her volition restored. Sharing and listening to stories keeps the seeker going and persistent for healing. Ward asserts:

Healing takes time. [Therefore] be as persistent as the Canaanite woman who would not let Jesus ignore her condition. She did not take 'No' for an answer ... Healing may take longer ... because it is not always easy to let go of deep-seated feelings or grudges.... (Ward 2014).

In South Africa, the deep-seated grudges are still there as a result violence has become common and used as entertainment even in the media (Van den Berg 2014). Although the process of healing takes a long time; effort and willingness determine the pace at which one gets healed (Ward 2014). Hence, this is the point where South African society falls short given the amount of violence being broadcasted on the media in the name of storytelling or entertainment the healing process can say to be neutralised.

(h) STORYTELLING HELPS IN BALANCING EMOTIONS: Demartini (2006:3) asserts that the healing process requires one to practice the balancing of one's emotions. The 'balancing of emotions' encapsulates sharing one's painful emotions or stories where one feels safe (2006:3). Since humans can change their minds and opinions, they can as well change their perceptions and feelings of their life events (2006:3). Balancing of emotions incorporates the process and experiences that change one's perception which includes focusing on the positive aspects of one's life experiences (Ward 2014).

SECTION B: this section responds to the sub-research question: What is the role of pastoral counselling in healing *painful memories*?

a. **ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED:** The organisations consulted which have healing of the painful memory and counselling as part of their vision and pastoral practice are as follows:

1. Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)
2. The *Diakonia Council of Churches* (DCoC)
3. The *Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness* (PACSA)
4. The *Thukela-Amajula-Mzinyathi Christian Council* (TAMCC)
5. The *KwaZulu Regional Christian Council* (KRCC)
6. The *iJubilee Connexion*
7. The *Ujamaa Centre*
8. *Young Men's Christian Association* (YMCA)
9. The *Vuleka Trust*
10. The *Thandanani Children's Foundation* (TCF)
11. The *Institute for Healing of Memories* (IHOM)
12. and The *Journey into Healing* (JIH)
13. The *Sinomlando* and *Thandanani* centres

(b) OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) helps in healing and reconciling individuals into a life of emotional well-being using workshops, policy papers, pastoral care procedures and prayers (Dziva & Ngoetjana 2011). TRC also uses healing of memories and reconciliation consortium which consists of different support groups that approach healing from different spectrums that include (1) the *Diakonia Council of Churches* (DCoC) which conducts stress and trauma healing workshops and debriefings; (2) the *Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness* (PACSA) which incorporates different churches and other partner communities in working together towards a transformed society of freedom, equality, human dignity and mutual respect; (3) the *Thukela-Amajula-Mzinyathi Christian Council* (TAMCC) which builds local clergy to support individual and group activities in healing the wounds of political violence, and tensions between farmers and farm dwellers; (4) the *KwaZulu Regional Christian Council* (KRCC) which offers capacity building for people who need healing of memories from political, domestic and taxi violence, and those affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic; (5) the *Ujamaa Centre* which instils hope and nurture positive living among HIV/AIDS infected people through workshops, awareness creation and community-based supports; (6) the *iJubilee Connexion* which contributes in the healing of refugees, explores ways to eliminate xenophobia and encourage churches and families to integrate refugees; (7) the *Young Men's Christian Association* (YMCA) which mobilises the youth to participate in capacity building processes and healing of memories sessions on masculinity and male-chauvinism; (8) the *Vuleka Trust* which helps organisations and people in dealing with issues of diversity and intolerance (e.g. homophobia, racism, xenophobia, masculinity etc.); (9) the *Thandanani Children's Foundation* (TCF) which provides supports and empowerment to the

children that are orphaned due to HIV/AIDS; (10) the *Institute for Healing of Memories* (IHOM) which offers healing of memories workshops to the memory-wounded persons and trains people to be competent facilitators of healing of memories sessions; (11) the *Journey into Healing* (JIH) which conducts a journey into healing workshops, and also trains seminarians, priests and nuns into being efficient facilitators of the healing workshops; (12) the *Sinomlando* and *Thandanani* centres provide healing through the Memory Box programme (Ntsimane 2006:14); and (13) the *Institute for Healing of Memories* (IHOM), and sister institution *Journey into Healing* (JIH) that offer workshops for healing interventions (IHOM 2009). Thus, these organisations in their similarities recognised that South Africa's past is just wounded, but such wounds have affected (and continue to affect) the present and future lives of its citizens (Dziva & Ngoetjana 2011:2-3). The support groups engage in a collective effort to provide healing of memories and emotional pain in a community and pastoral-oriented fashion. Hence, these healing or support groups are managed by non-governmental organisations that have allies with different religions; such that they reach out to families and communities using volunteer lay and religious people, clergy and other skilled or professional operatives (Onwuegbuchulam 2016). Since the dawn of democracy, the programmes by these stakeholders enables families to reunite through forgiveness, reconciliation and recovery of lost human willingness to heal their painful memories (Ntsimane 2006:7).

(c) WORKSHOPS AND METHODS: the general methodology used for the workshops is guided by similar principles (Denis 2011b). Firstly, a team of skilled or trained facilitators are provided who use emotional movies, drama, personal storytelling, prayer and songs to trigger painful, traumatised, hurting experiences and memories (Denis 2011b:21). This process is intended to evoke emotions and prepare participants mentally and psychologically for the healing (2011b:21). Thus, the process that provides a safe space and the participants are put into small groups to share their stories such that the individual begins to build trust and mental strength (Okeke 2017). Each group is accompanied by a trained or skilled facilitator who directs the session accordingly. The climax of the session is when each participant receives ample opportunity to share his or her story, while others listen in empathy (2011b: 21). Most times, the facilitator is a survivor trained to use their healing experience to support other group members (2011b: 21). The facilitators help each storyteller to clarify and get in touch or connect with their own stories. The stories shared in every group are bound by the ethics of confidentiality. A debriefing is made general from the experiences of particular groups. The workshop facilitator throws some emphasis on aspects of the healing process as the brief reflection that would ignite unique personal introspection toward healing (Nell 2011). The healing exercise is concluded with a ritual of Prayer Service which includes the making of one's *Mandala* using clay or other symbols (Vorster 2014). *Mandala* is a Sanskrit word for a healing circle. It is a symbol of the self, of unity, completeness and perfection (Vorster 2013:83). *Mandala* also serves as a symbol of healing and unity of the mind to particular individuals e.g. flower, rock, sea, leaf, sand, tree, river, wood, fire, wind, and so on (see Viljoen 1994:82; Vorster 2014a).

(d) ROLE OF PASTORAL COUNSELLING: the participant observation has shown the amazing network with which these organisations interact with both the grassroot communities and their participants (Denis 11b). Lartey (2003:62) enumerates the characteristics of pastoral counselling and the important role it plays in the healing process including sustaining, guiding, reconciling, nurturing, liberating and empowering the seeker. In *sustaining*, the process enables participants to find strength and support in certain human situations through reflection and introspection. Hence, receiving, gathering and giving strength and support is targeted and achieved in every step of the process. This helps participants cope with the predicaments encountered and grappling with in their life's praxis (2003: 62). In *guiding* participants grow by learning from others or being guided and supported by others (i.e., by the entire family). *Reconciling* brings participants back to healthier human relationships such that human relationship is (re)enkindled. Thus, this involves reconciling people who have frightening and difficult issues in their lives and have drifted away from proper human interaction. *Nurturing* helps participants learn to live (or at least survive) in certain situations of life. In *liberating*, the pastoral counsellor helps participants to free and liberate themselves from the shackles of crises and injustices surrounding them. *Empowering* enables and motivates participants to think and act in ways that bring freedom, proper participation and contribution to society. Thus, it provides the means of moving people into positive and valuable actions (Lartey 2003:62; Waruta & Kinoti 2000).

VI. DISCUSSION

Meanwhile, in drawing strength from the exemplary life of Jesus' ministry, pastoral counselling and ministry recognise the impact of the greater power of God when we (humans) are in search of healing (Jn 3:16). The Suffice once said that God put people on earth because [God] loves stories (Tutu 2009). This implies that every aspect of human life is (re)created through a story, which is evident in the creation stories such that we get life through the "Word" which is God through Jesus Christ (Jn 10: 10, Jn 1:1). The vision of heaven shows that God's plan, strength, healing and vision have always been the vision of community (Tutu 2009). The

community meddle with relationship, interaction and support and none of these can be possible without the word. God brought every creature into existence through words by the command “Let there be light, and there was light . . .” (Genesis 1:1-31, Genesis 2:1-4). This further manifests in the New Testament where Jesus taught the disciples through parables and stories (e.g., the parable of the Good Samaritan) (see Luke 10:25-37) to insight them into deep thoughts of reflection and storytelling as moral action. This illustrates the power of storytelling and its connectedness with the creation and the Creator (Denis 2011 a). Storytelling also discloses the secret of sharing; thus, what can happen through sharing (either hurtful or gracious feelings) and experiences? Ward (2014) asserts that if one chooses to hold onto anger one’s (w)holistic healing becomes impossible. In other words, one must make effort to liberate oneself from the bondage of the past painful memories by speaking up, to reach wholeness.

Similarly, DeMartini (2006:2) argues that people should not constrain the healing power of unconditional love, forgiveness, reconciliation and sharing which is found in storytelling. An axiom infers that when “you let go; you let God” and to relate with others is tantamount to relating with God which remains the work of pastoral operatives (Ezenwanne & Mitchell 2015). Thus, uniting the people with the Source of their being (Onwuegbuchulam 2016). Notably, living in brokenness and painful memories may intercept growth in an individual, others and the entire community (Ward 2014). African societies in their various cultural practices do practice counselling which comes informally through the assistance of elders, friends, family members, neighbours, and traditional leaders (Waruta & Kinoti 2000:2). The connection between the informal (or culturally based) counselling processes should be intensified in South Africa. Experience has shown that many African individuals cannot link informal African counselling with formal counselling as such they shy away from accessing formal counselling (Moyo 2014). Most African cultural beliefs attach secrecy to sacredness and maturity, which is why men are discouraged to cry or voice out. As such, Denis (2011b:28) argues that in some African cultures, healing of memories and counselling are often neglected because people are simply scared of opening ‘a can of worms’ or sharing with strangers their deep pain (2011b:28). Increased urbanisation has been blamed for the increased of human stress; whereas civilisation and capitalism have been blamed for the rising need for professional counselling (Waruta and Kinoti 2000:3). This argument takes for granted that every society, have issues relating to marriages, relationship, abuse, trauma, family dispute and oppression which require people to seek specialized help (Louw 2000).

In South Africa, it is worthwhile to acknowledge the experiences of conflict in the apartheid era and to remain aware that ‘post-conflict South Africa is still a deeply divided country’ (Dziva & Ngoetjana 2011). The children of people marginalised during apartheid live in abject poverty as a result would find it difficult to write pleasant stories (Okoye & Mensah 2021). In order to re-write the ugly past, South Africa needs the government to boost people’s socio-economic well-being and avoid bandaging the wound without first cleaning it. Firstly, the poor need their lives uplifted, education must be for liberation as well as education (Okoye & Mensah 2021). This would then be followed by an integrated healing drive.

Moreover, Lapsley sees the atmosphere of the healing workshops as a safe place to ‘vomit the poison’ that had filled someone’s heart through storytelling (Nell 2011:48). Thus, in the process of telling their story participants vomit the bitterness that hinders, prevents or delays them from being healed. This present generation has to get in touch with their wound. The pastoral care and healing of wounded-memory facilitators must be encouraged (Denis 2011a:5). Although citizens may still remember the painful experience when healing has taken place, such painful incidents would no longer be a threat or cause distress in their lives (Ward 2014). Pastoral counselling and storytelling have challenges in Africa (Denis 2011a:14). Oftentimes, the individual encounters the difficulty of unaffordability or getting access to his or her emotional experiences of pain which elongates the process of healing (2011a:14). Storytelling in a mixed healing group, may be hindered when one struggles to articulate one’s story in a second language (2011a). This problem applies to a pastoral counselling encounter where the seekers struggle to express themselves in a second language to accommodate the language of the counsellor who is from a different language background. This however explains why many African people prefer to share their pains in communal or family reconciliation rituals (Okeke, 2017). The challenge is that the structure and flow of contemporary social life have changed to some extent which makes it less attractive for families to meet together for such family healing, informal reconciliation and rituals. The formal counselling platform has been criticised for encouraging individuality because it allows an individual to work through his or her healing without having to informally commune with family members (Denis 2011b). The African healing organisations struggle a lot with funding as if their contribution is less important to society. Despite their services being offered free of charge, the availability of funds for running those workshops determines their efficiency or limitations. This is where the government is needed most; unfortunately, the governments of (un)developed nations do not consider sponsoring healing platforms as important. Thus, this study recommends the following:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- South African government should prioritise the healing of memories programmes and make it an ongoing project by including a necessary financial budget that would subsidise the expenses of the Institutions thereby expanding the healing structures across South African communities.
- This country wants to protect women from violent men, but isolates, and neglects men's mental health thereby sacrificing men's protection. Men's counselling drive and facilities is a sinequanon in South Africa and beyond. It should be provided in men's workplaces, schools, mines and local communities to provide men with the opportunity to speak out their stories and anger.
- The government should regulate the level of crime shown in South African media in the name of telling our story or entertainment (the age limit and warnings are not enough). Thus, a serious censoring policy should be extended to the production nomenclature of these entertainment programmes. The flaunting of violence on the media (or TV) is taking the nation backwards. The media artists should be more creative by initiating programmes like *Khumbul' ekhaya* that would encourage social cohesion, love, reconciliation, laughter, humour, forgiveness and motivation for the rediscovery of the beliefs in the transcendent healing God.
- The Church and government should partner to extend the healing and rehabilitation programmes to the street kids and "paras" (African Check 2017). Similarly, one could see what is happening in the streets of South Africa, Philadelphia in Pennsylvania (USA) and other places where people in their productive ages are hopelessly stuck on the street abusing drugs. Policy intervention is needed to overturn the overwhelming spread of "streetkidsm" or "para" in the world (Okoye & Mensah 2021).
- Philosophy may need to be (re)introduced in South African primary and high schools as thinking has become a challenge to the young generation in recent years.
- Definitions of family, sexual orientation and relationship definitions should be expanded in the national policy to widen the options where people's life preferences and rights are respected to increase human happiness and well-being.
- The church must be regulated. The church operatives must be mandated to have theology qualifications (or preferably a related degree) from a reputable university, just like in the teaching profession before being licensed to lead a church. This is to ensure that the church and its leaders are part of the solution, not the problem.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study argued that storytelling and pastoral counselling are powerful tools that can heal painful memories at the community and individual levels. The importance of integrating the African informal counselling method, the pastoral and formal counselling approach is critical. For instance, the integration of traditional peacekeeping, forgiveness and memory healing rituals in the society in a way that functions not as an alternative but as a roadmap to formal or pastoral counselling in South African society. Unfortunately, the modern church(es) seem to be sleeping with the magicians or rather the magicians seem to have found a new stage which makes some religious and pastoral practices appear as a scam. This situation does not help or promote religion's pastoral agency in African society. It is surprising that a moral institute such as the church with supposedly trained moral superiors has no "dos and don'ts" such that we witness atrocities being committed or perpetuated in the church by so-called church leaders. Although not every church is found guilty, one wonders why the regulation of the church has not been actualised or taken seriously by African states.

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