

Problems and Coping Strategies of Internally Displaced Adolescents in Jos Metropolis, Nigeria

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Abstract

The intensity of internal displacement arising from violent conflicts and its dire consequences on the adolescent population over the past year has turned the attention of both local and international agencies to Jos metropolis, where human activities are usually paralyzed because of involuntary temporary relocation. This study therefore investigated the problems and coping strategies of internally displaced adolescents in Jos metropolis. The snowball sampling technique was used to select 200 hundred respondents that participated in the research exercise. A self-designed instrument titled “Problems and Coping Strategies of Internally Displaced Adolescents Questionnaire (PCSIDAQ)” was used to collect required information. The results showed that educational and emotional problems are most prominent among internally displaced adolescents. The emotional problems are characterized by memory of fearful events and nightmare. The major coping strategy employed by respondents is repression because they often avoid thinking about their present condition. Respondent were different in their problems and coping strategies on the basis of gender. On the other hand, they were similar in terms of their problems and coping strategies based on age and educational status. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that alternative educational activities should be provided for internally displaced adolescents. Also, trauma counselling should be adequately and readily available for displaced adolescents.

Key words: Internally Displaced Persons, Adolescents, Jos Metropolis

Introduction

The intensity of internal displacement arising from different factors, which include violent conflicts and natural disasters, has become a global problem. It has emerged as one of the great human tragedies of the 21st century. At the end of 2008, estimates of 26 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) were found across the countries of the world, Nigeria inclusive (Norwegian Refugee Council, NRC, 2009). According to international definition, IDPs are persons or group of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR, 2007). It is expedient to clearly distinguish between refugees and IDPs. If the displaced persons have crossed an international border and falls under one of the relevant international legal instruments, they are considered refugees.

The definition of internal displacement reflects two major components of the IDPs; the coercive or otherwise involuntary character of movement and the fact that such movement takes place within national borders. First, some of the most common causes of involuntary movements are armed conflict, violence, human rights violation and disasters (NRC, 2009). Thus, it is important to note that these causes have in common that they give no choice to people but to leave their homes and deprive them of the most essential protection mechanisms, such as community networks, access to services and livelihoods. The second component of the IDPs is the movement within national borders. Since IDPs remain legally under the protection of national authorities of their habitual residence, unlike refugees who have been deprived of the protection of their state (country) of origin, they are expected to enjoy the same rights as the rest (undisplaced) of the population. It is rather unfortunate that the condition is not always like supposed but the other way.

The various factors which have brought the case of internal displacement to the limelight had also helped to generate the statistics of IDPs – the figures vary among countries of the world. Indeed the global figure may not adequately represent the accurate incidence in various parts of the world because of the fluctuating nature of internal displacement. Some IDPs may be returning home while others are fleeing, others may periodically return to Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps to take advantage of humanitarian aid, many would not register, and significant population take refuge in unknown locations. While the case of IDPs in large camps such as those in Dafar, Jos (Nigeria) and Bosnia – Herzegovina are relatively well-reported, it is very difficult to assess those IDPs who flee to larger towns and cities.

Generally, ethno-religious conflicts have been plaguing Nigeria for decades but there has been worrying upsurge in the level of violence in 2004 in Central Plateau State. Reports (National Commission for Refugees, NCFR, 2010) revealed that as at 2007 Plateau State has the highest population of IDPs in Nigeria when compared with other affected parts of the country. Although the crisis that led to the displacement in Plateau State affected some villages outside the state capital, it is imperative to note that Jos metropolis usually plays host to the affected victims because of various camps readily available to accommodate IDPs.

Table 1: Summary of IDPs Spread Across Nigeria; 2003 – 2007

S/N	States	Causes	Year	No of IDPs
1.	Yobe	Flood/Fire	2003 – 2007	300,000
2.	Jigawa	Flood/desert storm	Persistent	200,000
3.	Delta	Indigene-settler/economic neglect	Persistent	500,000
4.	Cross River	Communal/land dispute/Bakasi crisis	2003 – 2007	250,000
5.	Plateau	Indigene-settlers/Religious conflict	Persistent	550,000
6.	Osun (Ife-Modakeke)	Indigene-settlers	2003	200,000
7.	Kano	Ethno-religious	Persistent	300,000
8.	Kwara	Ethno-religious	2005	160,000

Source: NCFR Networking Report (2007)

*NB: Plateau State has the largest number of IDPs.

About the mid 2008 new incidents of post-electoral violence causing displacement were reported, the worst recorded being the inter-communal unrest which erupted in November in the city of Jos (IDMC, 2010). The continuing sectarian violence between people of different faith erupted again in Jos in January, 2010. According to reports (IDMC, 2010) more than ten thousand people were earlier displaced. During the crisis, the IDPs went as far as Bauchi State to take refuge because of the possibility of further attacks around Jos. Before the crisis was put under control it was reported that no less than 23,950 people were displaced; the victims who consisted mainly adolescents, were camped in different locations within Jos metropolis for safety and monitoring.

Table 2: Figures of IDPs in camps during Jan – Feb, 2010 Ethno-religious crisis within Jos City

S/N	No of Persons	Location of Camps
1.	3,000	NLEA Training Centre, Lamingo
2.	2,500	Police Staff College, Bukuru
3.	2,000	Airforce Base, Rayfield
4.	1,450	Multi Troups Training Centre
5.	3,000	GOC, Rukuba Barracks, Jos
6.	3,000	COCIN, Catholic, Baptist and Ruban Primary School
7.	6,000	Bukuru Police “B” Division
8.	3,000	Central Mosque

Source: *The Punch, Mon. Fed 22, 2010; p.8*

Whatever patterns it takes to displace the adolescents, the most tragic thing is the dire consequences the condition imposes on the young boys and girls who are at a significant and strategic stage of development. In a great measure, the displaced adolescent may be in transit from one place to another, may be in hiding for a particular duration of time, may be forced toward unhealthy or inhospitable environment or taken hostage by other communities.

All these endanger the life of the young boy or girl who supposed to be receiving profitable training at such a time. The social organization of displaced communities may have been destroyed or damaged by act of physical displacement. Such condition may separate or disrupt the family network relationship that would have helped the social development of the adolescent, hence the victims on the long run resort to maladaptive behaviours.

The ethno-religious crises (especially) and other factors, which have become a constant internal cankerworm plaguing Nigeria for decades, are responsible for displacement of over 1.2 million victims as at 2007. The situation in Jos is more spectacular not because of the large number of persons been affected but the particular group that is always most devastated; it often brings a halt to the aspirations and legitimate activities of the adolescents, especially as a result of indefinite closure of schools, vocational centres and employment opportunities. Many of the displaced female adolescents in Jos experience sexual abuse in the highest order while the males are exposed to forced labour and criminal activities such as arson, fire arm possession and use, stealing “for survival” and other social misconducts that could cause permanent damage to their personality development. Owing to the dramatic changes in their lives, and under condition not of their choosing, the internally displaced adolescents may be compelled to employ coping strategies as a measure to meet up with essentials of life. Coping strategy is a cognitive, emotional and behavioural method that one utilizes to manage or reduce stress and its effects (Dada, 2006).

Dada (2006) researched into problems of institutionalized African Refugees in Nigeria. The study found that refugees in Nigerian camps encountered various problems which include educational, psychosocial, communication, financial and health. Adegbite (2002) found that the refugees faced the difficulty of integrating among counterparts of different nationality. However, they (refugees) engaged in self-disclosure as a coping strategy to reduce the anxiety resulting from their condition. It is imperative to note that the previous studies did not put deliberate focus on vast number of internally displaced adolescents whose lives are been endangered by the consequences of their condition. This present study therefore considered it pertinent to investigate problems and coping strategies of internally displaced adolescents in Jos metropolis, Nigeria.

Research Questions

It is essential that research endeavour provides answers to particular basic questions. Thus, the following questions were attended to in this study:

1. What is the major problem of internally displaced adolescents?
2. What is the major coping strategy employed by internally displaced adolescents?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated for this study:

1. There is no significant difference in the problems of internally displaced adolescents on the basis of gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the coping strategies of internally displaced adolescents on the basis of gender.
3. There is no significant difference in the problems of internally displaced adolescents on the basis of educational status.
4. There is no significant difference in the coping strategies of internally displaced adolescents on the basis of educational status.

Scope of the Study

This study was an investigation into the problems and coping strategies of internally displaced adolescents. The research is limited to Jos metropolis where a number of people were displaced as a result of ethno-religious crisis. Out of the eight main IDP camps within Jos, the study only considered four locations where the population was considerably heterogeneous. Thus, respondents were selected across the variables of gender and educational status.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey method. This was considered because it allows researchers to use a representative sample of the entire target population and draw inference on the population.

Since the study could not therefore cover every internally displaced adolescent in Jos metropolis, the descriptive survey method was adjudged as being appropriate.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study adopted snowball sampling technique to select the 200 respondents that participated in the study. The method (snowball) is a sampling procedure in which the researcher identifies someone or a small group that meets the criteria for inclusion in the study. The identified individual or group is involved in the selection of others who they know equally meet the criteria for the selection of the required number (Trochim, 2006). The technique helped the researchers in selecting genuine internally displaced adolescents since there was influx of non-displaced young people who took advantage of porous IDP camps to enjoy humanitarian services and later leave for their stable homes or businesses, thus making it difficult to ordinarily identify the real target individuals.

Instrumentation/Scoring

The main instrument that was used for collecting the required information for the study was a self-designed questionnaire tagged “Problems and Coping Strategies of Internally Displaced Adolescents Questionnaire (PCSIDAQ)”. It has three sections; Section A sought personal information of the respondents, B focused on problems of internally displaced adolescents while C focused on their coping strategies. The instrument was constructed in both English and Hausa Language versions. Both Sections B and C were patterned in Likert scale format of Very True of Me (VTM) = 4 points, True of Me (TM) = 3 points, Rarely True of Me (RTM) = 2 points and Never True of Me (NTM) = 1 point.

Validity

The content validity of the instrument used in this study was established through five experts in the department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin while the Hausa version was validated by three language experts in the University of Jos.

Reliability

Reliability is an indication of the degree of stability or consistency of a measurement; that is, how far the same test would give the same result if used again on the same respondents at different occasions (Hassan, 1995). The internal consistency of the instrument (PCSIDAQ) was established by applying the split-half method. Thus, the reliability coefficient of 0.68 was established after subjecting the sets of scores to Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient formula.

Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained was analyzed using various statistical measures. The t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze the null hypotheses. The t-test is a parametric measure used to compare the mean of two groups while the ANOVA is an inferential statistics used to compare the means of three or more groups (Adana, 1996).

RESULTS

Table 3: Rank order of problems of internally displaced Adolescents

Problems	X	Rank
Educational	3.26	1 st
Emotional	3.14	2 nd
Health-Related	2.78	3 rd

Table 3 indicates the ranking of problems of internally displaced adolescents. Educational problems with a mean score of 3.26 ranked 1st which is followed by emotional problems, with a mean score of 3.14 and health-related problems ranked 3rd with a mean score of 2.78.

Table 4 indicates the rank order of items on coping strategies of internally displaced adolescents. Item 3 ranked 1st and it stated that, in order to live well, respondents often remember pleasant moments of the past. Item 6 ranked 2nd and it stated that respondents often avoid thinking about the present condition. Item 1 ranked 3rd and stated that respondents engage in private study as a coping strategy. Conversely, items 2, 4 and 8 ranked 10th, 9th and 8th respectively.

Table 4: Rank order of coping strategies of internally Displaced Adolescents

In order to live well I	\bar{X}	Rank
Often remember pleasant moments of the past	3.08	1 st
Often avoid thinking about the present condition	2.97	2 nd
Engage in private study	2.82	3 rd
Form discussion groups	2.79	4 th
Engage in learning new skills	2.74	5 th
Engage in sporting activities	2.54	6 th
Engage in religious activities	2.43	7 th
Build self confidence in myself	2.25	8 th
Often try to make friends	2.09	9 th
Meditate at quiet places	1.88	10 th

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the problems of internally displaced adolescents on the basis of gender.

Table 5: Means, standard deviation and t-value of responses on problems of internally displaced adolescents based on gender

Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	Calculated t-value	Critical t-value
Male	96	45.2083	3.53007	198	3.35	1.96
Female	104	42.3077	3.08663			

*Significant, $p = 0.05$

The result of the t-test in table 5 indicates that the critical t-value (1.96) is less than the calculated t-value (3.35). Since the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value, the null hypothesis is rejected $t(198df) = 3.35, 0.05$. Thus, there is significant difference in the problems of internally displaced adolescents based on gender.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the coping strategies of internally displaced adolescents on the basis of gender.

Table 6: Means, Standard Deviation and t-value of responses on coping strategies of internally displaced adolescents based on gender

Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	Calculated t-value	Critical t-value
Male	96	26.0729	2.50576	198	2.15	1.96
Female	104	25.0577	3.27636			

*Significant, $p = 0.05$

The result of the t-test in table 6 indicates that calculated t-value (2.15) is greater than the critical t-value (1.96). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, $t(198df) = 2.15, 0.05$. There is significant difference in the coping strategies of internally displaced adolescents based on gender.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the problems of internally displaced adolescents on the basis of educational status.

Table 7: ANOVA result comparing responses on problems of internally displaced adolescents based on educational status

Source of Variance	Df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	Calculated f-value	Critical f-value
Between Group	2	422.304	211.152	2.90	3.00
Within Group	197	2901.696	14.729		
Total	199	3324.000			

The result on table 7 indicates that the calculated f-value (2.90) is less than the critical f-value (3.00). The null hypothesis is therefore accepted, thus, there is no significant difference in the problems there is no significant difference in the problems of displaced adolescents based on educational status.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference in the coping strategies of internally displaced adolescents on the basis of educational status.

Table 8: ANOVA result comparing responses on coping strategies of internally displaced adolescents based on educational status

Source of Variance	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	Calculated f-value	Critical f-value
Between Group	2	89.106	44.503	2.71	3.00
Within Group	197	1646.587	8.450		
Total	199	1735.693			

The result of ANOVA statistics in table 8 indicates that the calculated f-value (2.71) is less than the critical f-value (3.00). Thus, the hypothesis is accepted; there is no significant difference in the coping strategies of internally displaced adolescents on the basis of educational status.

Discussion of Findings

On the problems of internally displaced adolescents the results of the study revealed that education was rated highest by the respondents. The educational problems encountered by the respondents include inability to attend school activities or educational programs, inability to access scholarship opportunity while in camps and inability to access educational materials. This finding agrees with the study of Dada (2006) where educational problem was the most prominent among African Refugees in Oru Camp, Nigeria. The reason for this similarity could be as a result of none provision of alternative educational opportunity for school-age individuals that constituted the larger proportion of IDPs. According to NRC (2009), the longer the adolescents stay in camp the more they become worried over their educational aspiration.

Emotional problems ranked 2nd among the difficulties faced by internally displaced adolescents. These include constant feeling of unhappiness, memory of fearful events, frequent nightmare, and negative self-concept. This finding is similar to that of Dada (2006) where psycho-social problem was highly significant among African Refugees in Oru Camp, Nigeria. The reason for this could be as a result of the traumatic experience that led to the displacement of the victims. Internal displacement is particularly tragic because of the social and psychological dangers and indignities to which it exposes the innocent victims.

On the coping strategies, the results revealed that respondents often avoid thinking about the present situation but remember pleasant moments of the past. The method is similar to repression, a form of defense mechanism characterized by deliberate prevention of painful or threatening thoughts from entering consciousness (Uba, 1987). The strategy might be preferred since it helps IDPs (adolescents) to minimize constant memory of traumatic experience that led to their unpleasant condition.

Hypothesis 1, which states that there is no significant difference in the problems of internally displaced adolescents, was rejected. The result supports the findings of Dada (2006) where it was established that male and female African Refugees in Nigeria were different in term of the problems they encountered in camp. The reason for the similarity in both studies may be traced to the fact that the displaced female victims are specifically vulnerable to sexual violence from counterparts, officials and intruders whereas male victims may only experience forced labour.

Hypothesis 2, which states that there is no significant difference in the coping strategies of internally displaced adolescents on the basis of gender was rejected. The result equally agrees with the findings of Dada (2006) who established that male and female African Refugees in Nigeria have different coping strategies in camps.

Hypothesis 3 was accepted. It stated that there is no significant difference in the problems of internally displaced adolescents on the basis of educational status. Dada (2006) earlier established similar result among African Refugees in Nigeria.

Since the sources of IDPs conditions are without preference to individual's educational level, there is tendency that the adolescents experience the same problems while in transit or on camps because there is no special provision for individuals of diverse educational status.

Hypothesis 4 was equally accepted. Thus, there was no significant difference in the coping strategies of internally displaced adolescents on the basis of educational status. The result disagrees with the findings of Adegbite (1999) who found significant difference in the coping strategies of African Refugees in Nigeria on the basis of educational qualifications. Since the refugees are drawn from different nationalities with different patterns of education there is the tendency that their coping strategies in camp be significantly different unlike the internally displaced who are usually from the same locality with same educational experience that may likely determine their coping mechanisms when faced with problems.

Conclusion

Consequent upon the findings of this study, it could be concluded that internally displaced adolescents are faced with various educational problems. These include, among others, inaccessibility to school, inability to participate in educational activities (such as study group) and inaccessibility to library/laboratory facilities. Equally, the internally displaced adolescents experience emotional problems in form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which is characterized by nightmare and memory of fearful events. The respondents were different in their problems and coping strategies on the basis of gender. On the other hand, internally displaced adolescents are similar in their problems and coping strategies on the basis of age and educational status.

Implications for Counselling/Recommendations

The findings of this study have pointed out some challenges especially emotional, faced by a significant fraction (the adolescents) of the society who unavoidably found themselves in unfortunate conditions (displacement). This therefore raises an appeal for the entrenchment of trauma counselling in the training curriculum of counsellors. Counselling profession has a lot to do in educating the society on the evil inherent in sexual abuse, especially against young girls who should be encouraged to develop and maintain healthy sexual life in order to prevent sexually transmitted infections, such as HIV.

In line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (Section III; Principle 23:2 & 4), all concerned agencies should ensure that educational opportunity is provided for adolescents throughout the period of their displacement. Furthermore, emphasis should be placed on the training of internally displaced adolescents in self-management skills which will enhance their coping strategy mechanisms for the period when they are still been dislocated from their place of abode.

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