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Implication of Mother's Depression on Educational Development of Internally displaced Nigerian Children

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Abstract

This study examined the implication of the mother's depression on educational development of the internally displaced children in four states in Nigeria. Correlational survey method was used to randomly sample 959 women and 706 children who were seeking refuge at IDP camps located in each of the four states participated in the study. Zung Depression Self-Rating Scale (1965) and numerical, verbal and visual reasoning tests developed by Bareet (2004) were used

to measure mother's depression and educational development of the children respectively. Pearson correlation was used to determine the relationship among the variables of study. Results show that, there was a negative correlation between the age of the mothers and sex of the children; a negative relationship existed between the age of the mother and their educational background; it further revealed that positive relationships were found between the mothers' depression and educational background of the children; sex of the children correlated negatively and significantly with the mothers' depression and, mothers' depression was significantly related to numerical, verbal and visual reasoning tests. The study concluded that displacement has a capacity to provoke fear, helplessness, depression or awfulness in response to the threat of injury, molestation or death and affecting the fundamental care for the children educationally by their mothers.

Key Words: Mother's depression, educational development internally displaced, women, children, Nigeria

Introduction

Globally, there has been a massive displacement from wars, conflicts, and natural disasters. In Nigeria, the rate of internally displaced persons (IDPs) by the insurgency is alarming due to terrorism, Boko Haram and herdsmen attack on the innocent citizen. The displacement particularly affects vulnerable group such a women and children who constitute the majority of the displaced population in Nigeria. (UNHCR, 2017). These individuals suffer from different types of illnesses ranging from heart attack to depression (Atenaga, 2018). The psychological needs of the displaced women and children are particularly significant and remain unmet given the magnitude of the problem. Women experience loss of spouse and children and this aggravates their fear and their sense of loss of dignity as many feel ashamed of their living conditions and that of their children.

It has been reported that out of one million, eight hundred and ninety-nine thousand, eight hundred and thirty (1,899,830) displaced persons, 56% are children (Nigeria Round XIV Report, 2017). Moreover, displacement in other countries of the world has been estimated to 26 million worldwide within their country as internally displaced persons (IDPs) as a result of various forms of warfare out of which 50% are children (UNHCR, 2009). In Cameroon for instance, monitoring report shows that girls displaced by Boko Haram insurgency are increasingly engaging in early and forced marriages thereby depriving them of their education, while in Nigeria, women have been targeted by abductions, forced marriages, rape and use of suicide bombers. Many women are reportedly coerced into resorting to survival sex in order to obtain food for themselves and their children or to be able to move in and out of the camp.

Internally displaced persons are some of the most neglected vulnerable people in the world because unlike their refugee counterparts, they are not acknowledged and recognised legally and internationally. Academic literature has consistently pointed to a negative relationship between armed conflict and the psychological health of children and adult civilians. Rofe and Goldberg (1987), for example found that women who were exposed to combat situations in Israel had heightened blood pressure. Migration and displacement which are associated with violent armed conflicts have also been associated with symptoms of depression (Shisana & Celentano, 1985; Vaga, Kolody, Valle & Hough, 1984). Figley (1983) ascertained that war events are often uncontrollable, life threatening and are likely to continue over long periods of time. According to WHO (2001), the most common conditions of armed conflicts are

depression, anxiety and psychosomatic problems such as insomnia, or back and stomach aches. A survey by Cardozo, Bilukha and Gotway (2004) showed that the disabled, children, adolescents and women had a poorer mental health status and traumatic events. Scholte, Olf and Ventevogel, (2004), in their study of Afghanistan war victims found that women had higher rates of symptoms associated with trauma than men. Mousa and Madi (2003) reported high levels of psychosocial problems among children, adolescents and Women in Palestine. In Sri Lanka, children and adolescents were found to exhibit higher mental morbidity (Somasundaram & Sivayokan, 1994). Studies have also revealed that women have an increased vulnerability to the psychological consequences of war.

Since July 2009 attack, Boko Haram militants has continued to unleash terror and havoc in Nigeria by bombing places of worship, police stations, military facilities, banks, media houses, beer parlours even the united nations building among others. These attacks leave in its trail hundreds of thousands of Nigerian citizens in the affected areas dead and internally displaced. Women, children and the aged usually suffer the most. Even those who survive the violence often retain its physical and psychological scars. Some of them are mentally deformed as a result of malnutrition while others become alienated from the society. Apart from wives of civilians that are caught up during these crises, another set of victims exists, they are the wives of officers and men of the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, who lost their lives fight against insurgency and terrorism.

Childhood is the foundation of adulthood and once lost can never be retrieved again in life. It is a delicate time when individuals are nurtured with the right temperaments to face the challenges of adulthood. According to Piaget (1952), it is the time which children's memory is formed, creative thinking and metacognition are developed to transiting them to the next stage of adolescence. Horrors of terrorism and internal displacement destabilize children and rob them of their childhood and education. It denies them proper socialization by disrupting and impairing the proper channels by which the child makes sense of the world (UNICEF, 2004). It truncates the smooth running of their academic program and leaves them at the mercy of non-governmental organizations (NGO) or other voluntary organizations who champion their cause. This is a huge problem to Nigeria, Africa and the world and call for urgent attention because a house built on wrong foundation collapses with time.

Chains of terrorist attacks, resulting in mass movement of victims to safer areas within the country keep Children in double tragedy of denied education and vulnerability to life-threatening diseases and psychological trauma. As mediators between the external environment, health and psychological functioning of their children, women are faced with the responsibilities of running the homes amidst fear of sexual violence by the terrorists. This poses a big challenge because displacement among other things, robs them of their farmlands, which is commonly their major source of income. A situation where mothers watch helplessly as their children are starved to death could be very disheartening and could be a source of depression. Going by research findings that mother's distress affects the child directly or indirectly, the current researcher is worried that the insurgency in Nigeria, could adversely affect children's intellect. Denying children the chance to education, balanced diet, good environment and exposing them to environments full of chaos and uncertainty is a sure way of pushing them into perpetual poverty and vulnerability. These factors have been advanced by scholars as reasons for intellectual backwardness and school failure. For them, the cycle of poverty is endless and the worst poverty is the poverty of the brain. This is a very big problem to the nation because

there is no real success without a successor. Every nation needs the intelligence and positive progress of the younger generation to advance. It is on this premise that the current research on the challenges of internal displacement on children's educational development becomes imperative.

Relevant study on the need for educational development of IDP children has revealed the fact that education for IDP children would serve as a protective function and conveys life saving messages (INEE, 2010), and gives the children the skills needed to function in their respective areas of displacement and on return. This could in turn likely to negate the negative aspect of long-term consequence of displacement on their mothers such as violence, rape and reduce child labour among the children (IDMC, 2010). In a study conducted by Ambe-Uva (2012) on the right to education for internally displaced persons in Nigeria through open and distance learning, it was observed that 65% of the IDPs lack educational opportunities. This could be as a result of psychological trauma experienced due to displacement. According to UNICEF DMT round (2015) 426 schools have been affected by the insurgency, including 73 in Adamawa, 297 in Borno and 56 in Yobe. At least 115 have been completely destroyed while 311 schools have been partially destroyed with the majority being in Borno State. More than 340,000 students have been affected by the insurgency with death among 314 (Adamawa -33, Yobe -263, Borno-18). 196 teachers killed from three states (Adamawa -14, Yobe-4, Borno -178). Among the barriers to education that IDP children frequently face is lack of infrastructure. In situations of conflict-induced displacement, schools have often been destroyed or damaged. In IDP camps and settlements, schools tend to be makeshift and only offer primary education. Many of the schools established—often by IDPs—lack basic amenities such blackboards and even roofs.

Internally displaced persons need more than food to survive and be more productive in the society. Their psychosocial needs are very crucial to their long run survival and re-integration into the society. It is hoped that at the end of this research, the knowledge base on depression of internally displaced mothers in Nigeria would be expanded and nature of their depression ascertained. Again, we hope that this research will bring to limelight the extent of damage caused by insurgency on the psyche of affected children in Nigeria. When this knowledge is established, machineries would be put in place for urgent and more realistic means of providing necessary psychosocial support and other psychological means of rehabilitating the victims.

Aim and Objectives

The major aim of this study is to critically examine the incidence of mother's depression resulting from insurgency/terrorism and internal displacement, how it impacts on the child's educational development and to proffer possible solutions.

Methods

Study Setting

The study was conducted in Kaduna, Nasarawa, Niger states and Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Kaduna state is located in the north western zone of Nigeria, Niger and Nasarawa states are located at north central zone of Nigeria, and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria. All these states have camping IDP camps within and outskirts of the states. While some have settled permanently in the camp (as observed in the case of one of the camps in Abuja), some are still transiting from relations' residence to the camp (Kaduna, Niger and Nassarawa camps). Due to overcrowding of IDPs in many of the camps in the affected states in the North East, it

gave birth to the IDPs camps in places like Kaduna and Abuja while camps in Niger and Nassarawa were opened largely due to herdsmen attacks. More than two thousand women and children IDPs were settled in each of the camps across the study states.

Study Design

The design for the study was a cross sectional survey. The study population included women and children IDPs aged between 16-80 and 6-18years respectively. The IDPs are the people displaced as a result of herdsmen attacks and other violent communal clashes and conflicts in Nigeria. It was observed that women and children were more vulnerable to the displacement.

Participants

Participants for this study comprised 959 women and 679 children (male 355 and female 324), who were randomly drawn from different camps for the internally displaced persons in Kaduna state, Nasarawa state, Niger state and federal capital territory (FCT). The women’s age ranged between 16 and 80 years with mean age of 3.53 and SD of 1.78 while the children’s age ranged between 6 and 18 with mean age of 1.27 and SD 0.45 respectively. Efforts were also made to reach those who were with relatives and those who have managed to integrate into the host communities.

Sample Size Determination

A simplified Yamane (1967) formula for sample size determination was adopted for the study.

$$N = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where n= is the sample size,
 N= is the population size
 e= is the level of precision

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} = \frac{2000}{1+2000 (.05)^2} = 333$$

Thus, the sample size for each state/camp was 350 but the total number of instruments retrieved and analysed were less than the minimum sample due to incorrect fillings of the questionnaires.

Study Instrument

A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect socio-demographic information from the study participants. Women’s depression was assessed with the use of Depression Self-Rating Scale by Zung (1965). It is a 20-item self-report questionnaire that is widely used as a screening tool, covering affective, psychological and somatic symptoms associated with depression. Each item is scored on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4 (“a little of the time, some of the time, good

part of the time and most of the time”). Children’s educational development was measured by numerical, verbal and visual reasoning tests developed by Bareet (2004). In the numerical test, children were asked to find out the number that would replace the question mark from information given. In the verbal reason, children were given some facts and some possible answers. They were to tick the letter that corresponds to the correct answer; and in the visual test, children were asked to choose, from the alternatives that were given, the one that would come next in line where there is a large question mark.

Data Collection and Procedure

Eight research assistants (data collector) who could speak both English and Hausa language fluently were recruited for the data collection. They were trained for the period of one week on the use of the study questionnaire prior to the onset of the study. Data collection took place for a period of one month because we were moving from one state (IDP camp) to another. The average duration for data collection in each camp was one week. Principal researcher and co researchers supervised the data collection.

Data Entry and Analysis

Data were entered into IBM SPSS 21.0 version. Descriptive statistics were used in summarizing the demographic data while inferential statistics were used to test the significant relationships among the study variables.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Mothers

Variables	Frequency	%
Age range of mothers		
16-20	129	13.5
21-30	188	19.6
31-40	169	17.6
41-50	233	24.3
51-60	69	7.2
61-70	114	11.9
71-80	57	5.9
Sex (Constant)		
Female	959	100
Educational Background		
No formal education	834	87
Primary	70	7.3
Secondary	52	5.4
Tertiary	3	0.3
Economic status:		
Civil servant	6	0.6
Non-Civil servant	950	99.6

Table 1 showed a total of 959 women participated in the study. The mean age of the IDP women was 3.53 years (standard deviation: 1.78) with a range of 1-100 years, participation of idp women was 100%. Of the 959 IDP women, 834(87%) had no formal education, 70 (7.3%) had primary education, 52(5.4%) had secondary education and only 3 (0.3%) had tertiary education.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Children

Variables	Frequency	%
Age range of the children		
6-10	515	72.9
11-18	191	27.1
Sex		
Male	355	52.2
Female	324	47.7
Educational Background		
Primary	315	46.4
Secondary	217	32
Out of school	147	21.6

Table 2 shows that the age children's age ranged between 16-18 years with mean age of 1.27 and standard deviation 0.45. Those who indicated their sex consisted of 355 (52.2%) male and 324 (47.7%) female. The IDP children's educational background revealed that 315(46.4%) had primary education, 217(32%) had secondary education and 147 (21.6) were out of school.

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of the IDP Children compared with normal population on numerical, verbal and visual reasoning tests

Variables	IDP (n)	Mean	Normal Population (n)	Mean
Numerical	959	0.479	150	9.327
Verbal	959	0.248	150	11.560
Visual	959	0.641	150	9.407

Table 3 shows the mean score of the IDP children as compared with normal children (children that were not internally displaced).

Table 4

Correlations among the study variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Age_A	1	-.22**	.52	-.15**	-.28**	-.06	.03	.04	.06	.06
Age_B		1	.15**	.03	.06	.14*	.09*	-.02	-.03	-.01
Sex_A			1	.02	-.07*	-	.22**	.03	-.05	-.04
Sex_B				1	-.25**	.56**	-.27**	.02	.07	-.24
Educbg_A					1	.25**	-.03	-.02	-.06	-.01
Educbg_B						1	-.13*	.01	-.04	-.08
Depression							1	-.03	-.04	-.07*
Numerical								1	.06*	.38**
Verbal									1	
Visual										1

**correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Correlations among the study variables are presented in table 2. Four features of these correlations are noteworthy. First, there was a negative correlation between the age of the mothers and age and sex of the children. Also, a negative relationship existed between the age of the mother and their educational background. Second, positive relationships were found between the mothers' depression and educational background of the children. The sex of the children correlated negatively and significantly with the mothers' depression. Fourth, mothers' depression was significantly related to numerical, verbal and visual reasoning tests.

Discussion

The present study sought to extend research on implication of mother's depression on educational development of internally displaced Nigerian children. Whereas most prior research on IDPs have focused on health issues of the IDPs and correlates of depression among the IDPs may be as result of post - election violence, ethno-religious crisis and communal clashes, the present study is novel in the sense that it is studying mother's depression and educational development of the children as against others that focused on health. The fact that studies have shown probable and definite symptoms of depression among internally displaced persons in Nigeria, the result of this study has provided a significant evidence and consistency on availability of depression among the IDPs mothers which could directly or indirectly affect the educational development of the children. The devastating effect of the mother's displacement has also been found to be related to the performance of the IDP children in numerical, verbal and visual reasoning assessment (Table 3). Exposure to this dreadful event has a capacity to provoke fear, helplessness, or awfulness in response to the threat of injury,

molestation or death which is capable of affecting the fundamental care for the children educationally.

As observed by Liang and Chen (2007), education is the engine room of social and educational development of a child, it is important for the displaced children to be enrolled as to continue with their elementary and secondary school at the various camps. This view was contrary to the outcome of the present study because ever since displacement, children were seeing rooming about the camp without any form of either temporary or permanent arrangement for continuous education for the children.

Correlating with other factors such as age, sex (constant for mothers/women) and educational background, the study revealed that majority of the displaced women are at their prime age of child bearing and formed larger percentage of the participants. This could not be overlooked because of its implication on the educational training of the children right from the onset. The women are often under precarious conditions, difficult for them to plan for their children continuous education, and their resettlement and they are forced to leave their belongings at their places of origin. Additionally, the women face violent acts that result in displacement leaving the scars in their psyche, coupled with the reality of finding food and shelter for their children at all cost. One would expect mothers to decide on the educational development of these children while seeking refuge in the camp. Contrary to this view as a result of trauma and depressive tendencies displacement has caused, mothers placed more priority after securing food and shelter on economic sustainability at the IDP camp neglecting the education of the children. There is a need to improve the wellbeing of the IDP women by government and other relevant agencies in order to reduce the predisposing factors to depression, this will in turn enable them pay maximum attention to overall education of their children.

Limitations

This study was conducted mainly with IDPSs living in the camps. It was actually difficult to contact those who had left camps to stay with relatives or some who have moved out of the camps for other reasons especially in Kaduna and Niger states, efforts were intensified and few respondents were gotten from those states.

Conclusion

This study concluded that the internally displaced children should be offered an opportunity to enroll in nearby schools within the communities where camps are located to reduce the sadness and trauma of their mothers. Federal, state, and local governments should task themselves by establishing temporary structures as schools in order to improve the educational quality of the displaced children and make education a more priority and effective means to combat the trauma of the displaced mothers and children.

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