



Determining the Causes of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS) and Counselling for Social and Psychological Adjustment in Plateau State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the main causes of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and proffered counselling intervention for social and psychological adjustment in Plateau state. The survey research design was adopted for this study. A questionnaire was used to elicit information from sixty (60) respondents who were randomly selected from the three camps for the study. 13 factors were presented to the respondents as to determine the main factors that are responsible for internally displaced persons in Plateau State, Data were analyzed and results indicated that the main causes of Internally displaced people in Plateau State include: herdsmen/farmers' conflicts, Boko Haram activities, Religious crises, Political conflict, Communal conflict, and disparity in political appointment. It was also found that the following factors are harmful and responsible for displacement of people from their homes in plateau state, which include: Security agents who cannot protect properties and harmless civilians, Natural disasters, and lack of employment. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations were made towards improving the enormous challenges arising from the internally displaced persons in Plateau state and Nigeria at large.

Keywords: Counselling, Social, Psychological, Adjustment

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Introduction

The peace and unity of Nigerian society is under threat by the activities of insurgents such as Boko Haram, herdsmen, kidnappers, and some religious fanaticisms. Despite the Nigerian government and neighboring countries' efforts towards stopping the insurgency, it is evident that the terrorists' activities persist in different parts of Nigeria, particularly in Plateau state. The achievement of peace and unity by any administration, therefore, calls for collective effort of Nigerians and urgent attention to the Social and Psychological Adjustment of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria, particularly, Plateau State. In recent times, thousands of people are being constantly displaced from their ancestral lands, their homes, communities, and states due to the activities of insurgents in Plateau state and Nigeria at large. The onset of this unacceptable

situation is very traumatic on individuals in Plateau state because it is accompanied by social and psychological problems. If these problems are identified and solved, according to Egwin and Iwuama (2014), the individuals will live fulfilling lives otherwise, more deep seated psychological problems such as anxiety, withdrawal, inferiority, depression, and low self-esteem will occur which leads to maladjustment.

The Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), according to the United Nations Guiding Principles (1998), are: persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or 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 internally recognized state border. Here, Internally Displaced

Persons (IDPs) refers to people who are forced to flee from their homes or communities to other places for safety within their country. The victims of this displaced persons suffer several consequences as the means of their livelihood, such as agriculture and trade are dashed out as a result of violent conflicts or disasters, which could be as a result of a consequence of human or natural factor (Ladan, 2006 in Lenshie, 2016). Ladan maintained that the IDPs experience worsening situation of food insecurity and malnutrition, and the effect is more on women and children. The effect of the displaced aggression by the herdsmen has been great in some parts of Plateau state, particularly in Bassa, Barakin Ladi, Bokkos and Royom Local Government Areas (LGAs). This includes the destruction of lives and properties, and forcing of people to leave their home communities and means of livelihood. The herdsmen killed people in Plateau State based on their belief system, particularly the non-Muslims.

Studies have reported that conflicts and the activities of insurgents had negatively affected development in many communities in Nigeria in recent times. For example, Mangvwat and Wamtu (2016), reported that these continuous attacks by the insurgents had affected development of communities in the areas of education, social, economic, moral life, and so on. Similarly, Hamma and Luka (2016) reported that the repeated bombings and attacks by the terrorists have left many towns and villages deserted with civilians bearing the impact of the conflict. In Plateau state, insurgent activities and conflicts between herders and farmers often leads to force migration of people from their homes every year.

The total number of IDPs can hardly be ascertained in Plateau state and Nigeria at large because of the limited access to rural areas affected by the insurgency and lack of comprehensive reports of IDPs movements have compounded the problem to obtain valid and useable information. However, Lenshie (2016) reported that the consequence of the displaced by Boko Haram Islamists aggression gave rise to over three million people displaced internally. Lenshie maintained that the



insurgency carried by the sect in the Northeast account for over 90 percent of the IDPs, with less than 10 percent caused by natural disasters in Nigeria. The Boko Haram sect activities led to the rising number of deaths of innocent citizens and security agents in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states, and rendering others refugees in neighboring countries of Cameroun, Chad, and Niger republics, among others Experience has shown that displacement in Plateau State and other parts in Nigeria usually take place both in urban and rural areas with most of the IDPs being taken shelters with their relatives, or in public buildings such as schools, hospitals, and churches/mosques.

Several reasons are advanced as to why people were forced to flee from their abodes (homes, communities, and even states) and become Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in their country. Researchers such as Ukaibe (2014); Wamtu, Lengs, and Cecilia (2014) have identified the causes of IDPs to include: broken homes, communal violence, natural disasters, political conflicts, riots, death, religious crises/extremism (Boko Haram) and strikes. Millions of people are displaced every year due to war, conflict, violence, natural disasters and environmental change. This threatens and causes serious demand for basic commodity like food, water, and shelters. It also threatens the International security and risk the lives of displaced people and workers who are helping the victims. It is obvious that the IDPs are in a dilemma and with special needs require urgent counselling intervention to prepare them for social and psychological adjustment to enable them have fulfilling lives in their respective communities.

Concept of Counselling. Counselling is one of the most important services of guidance that help individuals understand themselves and their present predicament or problems. Counselling is difficult to think of a single definition because its definition depends on individual point of view. For instance, Ajegbomogun (2008) defined counselling as a new knowledge extracted for human use with the aim of modifying behaviour, effecting changes, enhancing efficiency in all human endeavors. Counselling is an interpersonal

relationship through which a counsellor assists a person to develop skills, attitudes, behaviours and better understanding of his/herself. Similarly, Akinade (2005) defined counselling as a set of procedures used in assisting individuals in solving problem that arise in various aspects of their lives, or in assisting them to maximize their overall personal development so that they could be more useful in their society where they live. This definition indicates that problems arising in various aspects of lives could be conflicts, herders and Boko Haram activities, natural disasters, wars, religious conflicts, communal conflicts, and so on, which make people to flee from their homes, communities, and even states of origins for their security purpose. However, the unanswered question remains that which of these causes listed above are truly responsible for IDPs as perceived by the victims in Plateau state?

Social and Psychological Adjustment

Adjustment refers to the ability of an individual to correct or improve in dealing with his situation or problems successfully. Adjustment, according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary is a small change made to something in order to correct or improve it. For instance, a change in a way a person behaves or thinks. Ibude (1989) defined adjustment as an active, creative effort (by an individual) to live successfully. A person who is capable of dealing successfully with live problems, as well adjusted, but if he lacks the potentialities for problems solving and submits to them he is maladjusted. However, Social and Psychological Adjustment according to Egwim (1995), refers to adjusting to social and psychological activities, interactions, conforming to norms and social expectations, experiencing emotional stability, subjective happiness and contentment, relative freedom from handicapping anxiety, frustration, tolerance and flexibility.

Applying this view on the situations of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Plateau state, they are expected to make adjustment to social and psychological activities within their new environment. They are also expected to interact with others freely and conforming to



norms and social expectation, experiencing emotional stability, subjective happiness and contentment, relative freedom from handicapping anxiety, frustration and so on.

Counselling Needs for Internally Displaced Persons

Counselling service is necessary to help the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) cope with their daily challenges in life. Both Individual and group counselling could be employed when counselling the IDP victims depending on the individual's need. IDPs need to be counselled in their camps for social and psychological adjustment. Reasons for counselling IDPs in order to better their unfortunate situations such as:

Counselling for Support: IDPs should be counselled on the importance of finding support in the various social support groups in their camps. The counsellor should encourage victims to participate in their different religious activities, this will also enhance their sharing of ideas or experiences, and enhancing social support based.

Counselling for Cognitive Restructuring: Internally Displaced Persons do experience a lot of problems which usually make them become devastated by the loss of their properties or spouses and family members. Many of them are usually abused and accused by other people for no substantial reasons. These unacceptable behaviours compounded problems and stressful situations to the victims in the society. This, could further develop low self-esteem, feelings of guilt, depression, isolation, and a host of other social and psychological problems to the IDPs. Counsellors should help IDP to have positive thinking, and focus on the future instead of dwelling in their past life with their late family member(s) will only bring regret and frustration.

Counselling for improvement of thinking Process: Counselling helps to improve rational thinking process of an individual, particularly an internally displaced person who usually feels psychologically and emotionally

disturbed. Akume (2015) reported that their thinking become distorted and they are prone to despair and even suicidal ideation. He maintained that the counsellor should use appropriate counselling theories such as Rational-Emotive Theory, Existentialist theory, Rogerian Self Concept theory among others to help the victims improve on rational thinking process.

Counselling for Self-understanding: The importance of counselling IDPs in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. Counsellors should make the victims feel accepted, protected, appreciated, loved, secured and valued to avoid not looking down upon themselves as worthless and feeling that the end of the whole journey has come.

Counselling for Development of reasoning: Counselling as a helping service would not only enhance the internally displaced person's psycho-social adjustment, but facilitating the victim's faculty of reasoning to take up new responsibility of life without much stress. This suggests that the aim of counselling service is to assist troubled individuals better understand and solve their problems themselves.

Statement of the Problem

Conflicts, herdsmen and Boko Haram activities are becoming common in Nigeria, particularly in Plateau state. This threatens the peace and unity people used to enjoy in the state despite many attempts by subsequent governments at all levels to find everlasting solution to this unbearable problem. In an effort to contribute in finding solution to these problems, the researcher considered it necessary to thoroughly investigate the main causes of IDPs in Plateau state. The problem of this study, therefore, is to establish the main causes of IDPs as perceived by the victims in Plateau state.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the main factors that cause the displacement of people from their communities in Plateau state for social and psychological adjustment through counselling. The specific objective of



the study is to investigate the main causes of internally displaced persons in Plateau State for counselling intervention.

Research Question

Research question was raised to guide the study, that is, what are the main causes of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as perceived by the displaced victims in Plateau state?

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The choice of this research survey design is motivated because it provides information based on facts, opinions, attitude and perception of individuals on event, problems or situations. It also helps the researcher in finding out facts about the cause of IDPs as perceived by the victims in Plateau state. Target population of this study comprised of all Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Kassa, Haipang and Bann camps in Plateau state, totally about 820 people both adults and children.

The sample consisted of 60 (30 males and 30 females) displaced victims drawn from the target population as research respondents for this study. 20 respondents were drawn from each of the three selected IDPs camps (i. e Kassa, Haipang and Bann) in Plateau state. The proportionate stratified sampling technique was adopted and used in selecting 60 respondents among the IDPs for this study. The choice of this technique was informed because the IDPs camps are different in size. The technique also gives each element in the population equal and independent chance of being included in the sample.

A questionnaire designed by the researchers was used for data collection for this study. The instrument is titled "Internally Displaced Persons' questionnaire" consisted of 14-items on factors that cause the displacement of IDPs in Plateau state. All items were derived from literature reviewed. The instrument was validated by two lecturers in guidance and counselling unit, and one from research, measurement and evaluation unit, all in the Faculty of Education, University of Jos, Nigeria. The internal consistency of the

instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha method. It yielded an alpha value of 0.870 which indicated that the instrument was highly reliable.

The items in section B part were designed on the four-point Likert type of scale format which is classified into Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed. This classification is further grouped into Agreed (Strongly Agreed + Agreed) and Disagreed (Disagreed + Strongly Disagreed) because the researcher wanted to ascertain the respondents' degree of agreement or disagreement to items content in the instrument as the main causes of Internally Displaced Persons in the area under study. The items with positive direction were scored Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points; Agree (A)



3 points; Disagree (D) 2 points; Strong Disagree (SD) 1 point, while negative direction items were scored in reversed points.

simple percentages were used in answering research question. A percentage to an item was considered as a main cause of IDPs if forty percent (40%) and above respondents indicated the AGREED pattern of responses, while any percentage score below forty percent (40%) was rejected or DISAGREED as a main cause of IDPs in Plateau state.

Results

Research Question. What are the main causes of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as perceived by the displaced victims in Plateau state?

Table 1: Causes of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Plateau State, Nigeria.

S/N	Items	Agree	Disagree
1.	Broken homes can be responsible for IDPs in Plateau state.	14(23%)	46(77%)
2.	Communal violence/conflict can cause of IDPs in Plateau state	33(55%)	27(45%)
3.	Natural disasters are factors responsible for IDPs in Plateau State	26(43%)	34(57%)
4.	Political conflicts play significant role in causing IDPs.	34(57%)	26(43%)
5.	Disparity in political appointments in Plateau state.	33(55%)	27(45%)
6.	Religious riots/crises are responsible for IDPs	41(68%)	19(32%)
7.	Lack of employment can cause the IDPs in Nigeria.	26(43%)	34(57%)
8.	Boko Haram activities can cause IDPs in Plateau state.	51(85%)	9(15%)
9.	Kidnappers' activities can cause of IDPs in Plateau state.	10(17%)	50(83%)
10.	War can be a cause of IDPs in Plateau state.	9(15%)	51(85%)
11.	Herdsmen/farmers conflict can cause of IDPs in Plateau state.	57(95%)	3(5%)
12.	Security agents cannot protect properties and civilian lives.	31(51%)	29(49%)
13.	Bad governance at all levels can cause IDPs in Plateau state.	22(37%)	38(63%)

The table above shows factors that are responsible for the causes of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Plateau state. Based on the analysis of data, the respondents strongly agreed that the main causes of IDPs in Plateau state are: Herdsmen/farmers' conflict (95%), Boko Haram activities (85%), Religious crises (68%), Political conflict (57%), Communal conflict (55%), and disparity in political appointment (55%). They agreed that the following factors are also harmful and responsible for displacement of people from their homes which include: Security agents who cannot protect properties and harmless civilians (51%), Natural disasters (43%), and lack of employment (43%). The respondents

strongly disagreed with wars, kidnapper activities, broken homes and bad governance as the main causes of IDPs in Plateau state, but they may be major causes in some parts of Nigeria and the world at large.

Result

The findings of this study revealed among others that: Herdsmen/farmers conflict, Boko Haram activities, Religious crises, Political conflict, Communal conflict, and disparity in political appointments are major factors causing internally displaced persons. The research respondents have agreed that the following factors are also harmful and responsible for displacement of people from

their homes in plateau state, which include: Security agents who cannot protect properties and harmless civilians, Natural disasters, and lack of employment. The participants strongly disagreed that wars, kidnapper activities and broken homes are not main causes of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Plateau state, but they may be major causes elsewhere in Nigeria and other parts of the world.

Discussion

The study sought to investigate the main causes of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Plateau state for social and psychological adjustment through counselling. The results of the analysis confirmed that the instrument used for data collection was valid and reliable based on the judgement of experts. Findings from the analysis of data revealed that the main causes of IDPs in Plateau state include: Herdsmen/Farmers conflict, Boko Haram activities, Religious crises, Political conflict, Communal conflict, and disparity in political appointments.

The findings agreed with the studies of Mangyvat and Wamtu (2016); Wamtu, Lengs and Cecilia (2014), who found out that the causes of Internally Displaced Persons to include: broken homes, communal conflict, natural disasters, political conflicts, religious crises and extremism (Boko Haram) and strikes. The findings also agreed with Hama and Luka (2016) who posited that the activities of Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria have caused several waves of internal displacements.

Conclusion

The study revealed that the major causes of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Plateau state are herdsmen and farmers conflict, Boko Haram activities, communal conflict, and religious violence/crises. In recent times, many people are forcefully removed from their ancestral lands/homes to other communities in Nigeria due to herder's activities and communal conflicts. This unacceptable situation usually makes people to flee from their homes for security and take shelters in other communities with their relatives or move to the camps as internally displaced persons. The IDPs are experiencing enormous



challenges that calls for urgent attention by counselling psychologists and other stakeholders for assistance in of their basic needs such as food, water, and shelters. They also need security, health facilities, counselling and social services.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should make an urgent effort to stop or check mate the activities of Boko Haram, and herdsmen and farmers conflicts in Plateau state and Nigeria as a whole.
2. Government should have the political will to consider the basic needs of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) such as food, water, shelters, health facilities, and counselling services in order to reduce stress and trauma among victims in their camps.
3. Government should organize public talks, seminars and workshops in different communities in Plateau State for the need to live in peace with one another.
4. Government should talk to Leaders of various communities and individuals to cooperate with the security agents by reporting any movement of a person or group of persons that may likely cause breach of peace in their domains.

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