

ADOLESCENTS' SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES IN INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS CAMPS (IDPCS) IN GIREI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ADAMAWA STATE: A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) TECHNIQUE

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ABSTRACT: The study explored adolescents' socio-economic challenges in Internally Displaced Persons Camps in Girei Local Government Area, Adamawa State, Nigeria. Focus Group Discussion technique was used to interview adolescent boys ages 10-14 and 15-19 years. Altogether, 58 adolescent boys were interviewed in two separate Displaced Persons (DPs) camps; Girei 1 Primary School IDPs camp and NYSC Orientation, Damare IDPs camp using same set of questions and questioning technique. From adolescents' responses on their socio-economic challenges, adolescents have fears, anxieties, worries, hope and challenges they faced in DPs camps and as adolescents. Adolescents have ambitions of becoming physicians, lawyers, accountants, etc but they worry that they have been forced to leave their communities and therefore have no hope of completing their secondary education. They are also afraid of guns and what might happen to them and their loved ones whenever they get the opportunity to go back to their communities. Some adolescents fear that they may fail in life and become irresponsible to the society. In the camps, lack of adequate feeding, bullying and stealing, lack of education, joblessness, unplanned marriage, drugs addiction, poverty, disunity and indiscipline are some of the challenges they have faced. The study concluded that adolescents face complex socio-economic challenges that make survival more difficult in DPs camps, making them more vulnerable to challenges that aid resistance on their path to responsible adulthood.

Keywords: Adolescents, Socio-economic challenges, IDPs, Girei, FGD, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

There are many reasons why people are forced to move from their normal place of abode to a new and temporary abode. For example, natural disasters like flooding, earth-quake, wildfire, and man-made disaster such as insurgency, have caused people to be displaced. While there are similarities in the reasons why people all over the world are displaced, there are however differences in the demographics of people affected by the conflict and the severity of socio-economic and psychological challenges confronting them. Soltan *et al* (2022) opined that an unprecedented number of people around the world are experiencing forced displacement due to natural or man-made events. Jeff (1996) in a Refugee Survey Quarterly exercise reported that more than half of the world's refugees and displaced people are young people under the age of 18 years and in some situations, they constitute as much as 65% of the displaced population. The report therefore opined that while their conditions of life vary considerably, all of these young people have human needs which must be met and human rights which must be realized.

IDPs and Refugees face complex difficulties during emergencies such as having to settle in a new town, community or country, many may have witnessed or experienced traumatic events, many may have lost a relation or their loved ones etc. Reed, Fazel, Jones, Panter-Brick, & Stein (2012) reported that refugees often have to face the atrocities of conflict-related violence and the numerous hardships of flight and resettlements during crucial phases of their physical, emotional, social and cognitive development. Consequently, young adolescents and children become vulnerable and susceptible to mental health problems and other socio-economic challenges that affect their overall wellbeing. Mina, Ruth & Alan (2015) reported that Children's recovery is adversely impacted by a range of additional adversities, including socio-economic hardship, residential instability, and discrimination. Displaced parents often suffer psychological difficulties themselves, and may struggle to support children's changing developmental needs.

Nigeria had suffered Boko Haram insurgency since 2009 and had caused the forceful displacement of millions of people around the Northeast region of the country. The insurgency had displaced people leading to the creation of Internally Displaced Persons Camps (IDPCs) in Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Bauchi, Gombe and Taraba states. Some of the IDPCs are schools which were temporarily closed to host the Displaced Persons. In Adamawa State, Girei I primary school and Damare, NYSC Orientation camp were used as IDPCs to host IDPs from Uba town in Southern Borno, Madagali and Michika in Northern Adamawa. Girei I primary school and Damare IDPCs are both located in Girei Local Government Area in Adamawa State, Nigeria.

Adolescents' socio-economic needs are different from those of the adults. Even among adolescents, needs differ; needs of the adolescent girls differ from those of the boys. Similarly, needs of younger adolescents differ from those of the 'older' adolescents even though they are generally classified as adolescents. These differences in needs among categories of adolescents based on age, sex, etc. pose complex challenges on the appropriate way to respond to adolescents need in an emergency situation. Therefore, in emergency context, provision of relief intervention without recourse to the needs of different segments of the Displaced Persons can result in neglect of certain needs that can make life in camp more difficult. When people are displaced, everyone is affected; men, women, children, elderly, aged, People Living with Physical Disability, etc. Each segment of the affected population has their peculiar needs and challenges, but often these are neglected instead attention is on collective humanitarian intervention in order to bring relief. Thus, a segment of the population is unintentionally left out as their problems are not solved by the assistance being carried out. For instance, girls' menstrual hygiene among young adolescent girls is often neglected due to general response strategy that only addresses basic needs of food, shelter, water, etc or the neglect of boys because they are boys who are generally perceived to be strong and can fend for themselves. There is therefore the need to understand the complex needs of adolescents with a view to effectively assist them during emergencies. The aim of the paper therefore is to analyse the socio-economic challenges faced by male adolescents in the selected IDPCs in Girei LGA, Adamawa State. Outcome of the research is expected to boost response strategy in providing relief services to adolescents during emergencies.

Description of the Study Area

Girei Local Government Area is one of the 21 Local Councils and has 10 Political Wards in Adamawa State. It is located in Adamawa Central Senatorial District and it lies on the Benue

River. The tribes found in Girei are Yungur, Kanuri, Bwatiye, Fulani, etc. with substantial number of Bwatiye tribe dwelling in villages like Greng, Ntabo and Labondo. The occupations of the people include farming, cattle rearing and petty trading. Girei LGA has a Micro Finance Bank, a Police Station, a market and some media houses owned by government and private individuals such as ATV Yola, Fombina FM, Gotel TV, Gotel Radio, AIT, etc. The famous National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Orientation Camp is located in Damare Ward in Girei Local Government Area, Adamawa State. The estimated population of Girei LGA is 129, 995 people (REACH, 2022).

Literature Review

David, Dammeyer and Yakubu (2021) studied gender and place of settlement as predictors of perceived social support, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD), and insomnia among Internally Displaced Adolescents in North-East, Nigeria. A stratified sampling method was used to select 109 participants from IDAs living in the camp, while 27 additional IDAs were purposively recruited from those living in the host community. Participants completed measures of Harvard Trauma Questionnaire Part-II, Insomnia Severity Index, and Crisis Support. The result indicated insignificant effects of gender on perceived Social Support, PTSDs, and insomnia. Place of settlement had a significant effect on Social Support, with IDAs living in the camp having a higher mean score, while place of settlement had no significant effects on PTSD and insomnia. A significant interaction effect of gender and place of settlements on insomnia was found, with males living in the community having a higher mean score than their female counterparts, as well as both males and females in the camp. The study concluded that there is a need to understand male IDAs who reside in non-camp settings, their challenges, the outcomes they desire and the limitations they experienced.

Sara, Bruce and Marie (2014) explored the socio-cultural factors that mediate, facilitate and constrain the health and empowerment of refugee youth. The research was undertaken at a downtown drop-in centre in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada that provided settlement and integration services to newcomer youth using a grounded theory approach and draw upon participant observation, Focus Groups and In-depth Interviews. Twenty-six (26) youth age 18-25 years, representing 12 different countries of origin participated. The youth defined health very broadly touching upon many typical determinants of health (e.g. education, income, etc.). Yet factors of most importance (as demonstrated by the frequency and urgency in which they were discussed by youth) included a sense of belonging, positive self-identity, emotional well-being, and sense of agency or self-determination. The study conceptualized these as “mediating” factors given the youth argued they enabled or constrained their ability to cope with adversities related to other health determinant categories. The youth also discussed what we interpret as “facilitators” that encourage mediating factors to manifest positively (e.g. informal, non-biomedical settings and programs that nurture trust, break down access barriers, and promote a sense of community amongst peers, mentors, and health professionals). The study concluded that when creating health promotion strategies for refugee youth (and perhaps youth more generally) it is important to understand the factors that may mediate the magnitude of effects from various risks or stressors.

Scharpf, Kaltenbach, Nickerson and Hecker (2021) did a systematic review of socio-ecological factors contributing to risk and protection of the mental health of refugee children and adolescents across different socio-ecological levels (individual, family, community, socio-cultural context, etc) in high income setting. The study systematically searched the databases

Medline, PsycINFO, Web of Science, and Cochrane for English studies published in peer-reviewed journals between August 2010 and May 2020. A total of 2,413 studies were identified but only 63 were included in the analyses, 24 studies were considered to be of high quality. The study identified risks occurring to individual pre-migration to include exposure to war-related trauma while post-migration family risk factors include parental mental health problems and impaired parenting and family cohesion having the best evidence base. Post-migration community factors include school connectedness and support by peers. Socio-cultural risk factors include discrimination and acculturative stress, and integrative acculturation have gained some support in high-income settings. The study concluded that prevention and intervention approaches should integrate factors across different socio-ecological levels. The study recommended that more longitudinal studies and research in low- and middle-income countries are needed to advance scholarly knowledge on causal mechanisms behind factors contributing to refugee youth's mental health.

Nathan (2016) studied the need to provide mentoring for orphans and vulnerable children in internally displaced person camps in Northern Nigeria. He opined that the challenge of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) has become central to the response of many organizations such as UNICEF, UNHCR, UNFPA, etc. noting that the number of OVC throughout Northern Nigeria has increased due to Boko Haram insurgency. The study reported that an estimated 200,000 children under 18 years were made orphans as a result of losing parents to Boko Haram insurgency. Consequently, it is increasingly becoming difficult for their communities to meet all their needs including the need for positive role models and mentors. The study concluded that one approach to improve the holistic care of OVC in IDP camps in northern Nigeria is through mentors who provide mentoring programs and role modelling to adolescents in the camps.

Methodology

The adolescents interviewed were boys between the ages of 10-14 and 15-19 respectively. They were IDPs in camps located at Girei 1 Primary School and Damare in Girei Local Government Area, Adamawa State. The number of adolescents interviewed all together was 58. The IDPs came from Uba town, in Borno State, Madagali and Michika in Adamawa State. The camps were a school and a National Youth Service Scheme Orientation Camp that were temporarily closed to shelter IDPs because of Boko Haram insurgency in some parts of the Northeast. In the camps, there were classrooms designated for the younger adolescents of ages 10-14 years and below to continue schooling in addition to other facilities like toilets, a clinic, football pitch, tents, kitchen, worship centres for both Christians and Muslims alike, children recreation equipment and a water storage tank. Military (soldiers) were at the gate of the camp to provide security and make sure everything was fine.

The method used in interviewing the adolescents was the Focus Group Discussion technique. The procedure for selecting the adolescents involved a formal request to the Camp officials for permission to interview adolescent boys between the ages of 10-14 and 15-19 respectively. The request was granted and the adolescent boys were randomly selected for the FGD interview. Firstly, adolescent boys between the ages of 10-14 years were interviewed and later adolescent boys 15-19 years were also interviewed. Responses were recorded by a note taker and later typed in a computer using Microsoft word. The number of adolescent boys interviewed at Girei 1 Primary School was 33, while the number of adolescent boys interviewed at Damare Camp was 25. There were 58 adolescent boys interviewed all together. The set of questions used at

Girei 1 Primary School IDP camp were the same set of questions asked during the FGD interview at Damare IDP camp. The FGD at Girei 1 Primary School IDP camp took place in a classroom where the boys sat down on desks during the interview session that lasted for 90 minutes while the FGD at Damare IDP camp took place in an enclosed space for 90 minutes as well.

Results and Discussion

1. Adolescents' perception of who they think they are/what are you?

Adolescents ages 10-14 in their view think that they are children. "We are children, adults of tomorrow". They know that they are children who are not capable of taking care of themselves and because of that they depend on adults for their needs such as food, shelter, clothing, etc. For adolescents ages 15-19 they think that they are not children but they are not also adults. They said "we are youths, we are in-between the children and adults, so we are youth", "we are teenagers". The adolescents are aware of their identity, and what nomenclature fits their social identity.

2. How do people see and treat you and how do you feel?

For 10-14 years adolescent boys, they said "adults see us as children". They see us and are pleased with us because we do things they like, sometimes like running errands and heeding their corrections especially when we go wrong. Sometimes they are not pleased, this is when we disobey them". They treat us as people who need care and guide and so they (adults) always warn us not to get into trouble. They also show their appreciation by buying gifts for us. Adults in the camp see us as children and are kind towards us. For 15-19 adolescent boys, "adults see us as energetic and they treat us with respect. They are kind and call our attention politely for corrections. Living with adults sometimes is exciting and sometimes is not because whenever they are in good mood they are friendly and they like to talk about their experiences in life and they like to hear you also. Consequently, we are seen differently based on personality, some of us are seen as responsible young men while others see us as irresponsible.

3. Adolescents' challenges, fears, future ambitions and expectations

- i. What do you want to be in life?** For adolescent boys 10-14 years, they want to be everything. Some said "I want to be a pilot", another said a soldier, another a lawyer, yet another a navy, to another "I want to play football for a top club and so on and on. For adolescent boys 15-19 years, they have similar aspirations with the younger adolescents with some of them not sure of what they want in life.
- ii. What do you hope to be in the next five years?** For some adolescents 10-14 years "I hope to finish my secondary school education, to another I hope to be in the army and marry. For most 15-19 years they want to join the military service.
- iii. What are the things that worry you the most and why?** "I want to go back home". To another my worry is about finishing my education and be intelligent. Our worry is that we are now displaced and some of us are supposed to have finished our secondary education this year but we don't know what will happen to us, and our houses and properties". "We are worried about our relatives; we don't know where they are and we might not see them again". "I am worried about my father

because he was captured by the Boko Haram”. “I am the only one in my family that is here, so I am worried about how and where they may be”. “We are worried about our lives, how we shall cope when we get back because we lost our properties”. We worry that we are out of school now because of the insurgency. “I am worried about going back home”.

- iv. What are the things that make you fear the most and why?** “Guns”! “I don’t want to lose my parents because if my parents die, we will have nobody to pay our school fees and that may be the end of my education”. We are afraid of unplanned marriage and dropping out of school and also how to make money to support ourselves”. We are afraid even after we get back home, we might get attacked again”. “We are afraid of how life is going to be like, to start afresh with nothing tangible in our hands, it’s a difficult imagination”. “I am afraid of conflict that is going on in our country”. I am afraid of what may happen in future after my education I might not get employment. “I fear after we go back, those insurgents may come and attack us again only God knows what is going to happen”. “I am afraid that I might steal because if life gets difficult, one might not have many good options”.
- v. What challenges do you encounter in the camp?** For adolescents ages 10-14 they said “lack of adequate feeding in the camp, bullying and stealing, etc. For adolescents 15-19, challenges include lack of education, joblessness, unplanned marriage, drugs addiction, poverty, lack of unity and indiscipline.
- vi. What do you think is being done to address these challenges?** “The government is supposed to help us have free education and create job opportunities to the teeming youth”. More schools should be built and should be free for all. More facilities should be provided in our schools for learning, and potable drinking water but all these are not there. Government is not doing enough”. Not much as far as we know, only in the camp we are given clothes, soap and food and also medications. We have a temporary camp school. We should be given the chance to have a better and quality education. The government should try and take us back to our places with adequate security at least we would be better of.

4. Adolescents during their free time in the camp

For adolescents ages 10-14, they mentioned that when they were at home, they played games like cards, ludo, snooker (pool), soccer and sometimes go for grazing (goats), this is “when we’re at home. For adolescents ages 15-19, said “during our free time we play games, read stuffs like story books, visit friends or chat with friends”. They love to talk about everything, anything especially girls. They are fond of girls, they admitted having girlfriends. Even in the camp, they visit their girlfriends to gist especially in the evening.

5. Adolescents' routine in the camp

Table 1.0 Activity profile

| Time | Activity |
|----------------|--|
| 6:00am-7:30am | Wake up from sleep and wash up and begin to prepare for school. The school within the camp is for children and adolescents ages 10-14. |
| 7:30am-12:00pm | School time (for those adolescents who don't go to school within the camp, they relax and chat with their friends or play any game available to them). |
| 1:00pm-5:00pm | After camp school, we go and collect food at the kitchen. Afterwards, we play, read and relax for some time. |
| 6:00pm | Dinner |
| 7:00pm-9:00pm | Chat with friends/story telling. The small ones would have gone to bed. |
| 10:00pm | Time for bed. |

Field survey, IDPs Camps

Conclusion

Boko Haram insurgency has had great impact on Internally Displaced Adolescents interviewed both at Girei 1 Primary School and Damare IDPCs in Girei LGA, Adamawa State. Like other normal children, IDAs have ambitions and aspire to be useful members in the society in which they live. However, the insurgency has shaped their aspiration in life mostly towards military and para-military services although some still want to be physicians, lawyers, etc. When asked why, "they said if they were in the military, they would have defended their territory very well". The adolescent boys have realized that gun is a powerful tool, so they want to hold one apparently for the want of self and community defence. Furthermore, adolescents in IDP camps have worries as well as fears that can affect their mental wellbeing. They feel insecure about events happening in their immediate environment feeling odd that those events may pose danger to their wellbeing or something bad might happen to them or to people they love and cherish. They are not sure of their safety at any given time and their prospects for progress in life thus they become more vulnerable to anxiety and traumatic experiences that hamper their psychological wellbeing. From their experiences in the camps, enough is not being done to take care of the adolescents' needs in IDPCs, consequently they are left to fend for themselves, thus exposing them to all sort of dangers and wild behaviour that is detrimental to their survival.

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