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Contents

EDITORIAL BOARD.....	ii
INSTRUCTIONS TO CONTRIBUTORS.....	iii
SUBSCRIPTION RATES.....	vi
Contents.....	vii
 An Overview of the International and Nigerian Legal Framework for Prevention of Aircraft Sabotage Ismail Adua Mustapha & Kayode Ibrahim Adam	 1-16
 Law and the Politics of Impeachment in Nigeria: Interrogating the Basis of Judicial Control of a Political Process Mojeed Olujinmi A. Alabi & Ibrahim Imam	 17-30
 The Impact of Social Media on Citizens' Mobilization and Participation in Nigeria's 2011 General Elections Michael B. Aleyomi & Olanrewaju O.P. Ajakaiye	 31-52
 Women and Political Participation in Nigeria: A Case for Enhanced Mass Media Mobilization Wonuola, Monsurat Modasola	 53-68
 Rivalry or Partnership Policing?: Harvesting the Gains of the State and Non-State Security Providers in Ilorin, Nigeria. Bakare, Adebola Rafiu	 69-88
 Psychosocial Challenges of Disaster –Induced Internally Displaced Women in Lagos State S. K. Ajiboye; A. A. Akinlabi; & M. Ajokpaniovo	 89-98
 Discipline in the Classroom Setting Abdullahi, O.E., Oluwawole P. Blessing & Akindasa R. Abosedo	 99-116
 Teachers' Qualification as Predictors of Senior High School Students' Performance in Social Studies in the Central Region of Ghana Angbing, Hippolyt Dickson	 117-128
 The Contributions of Ilorin Scholars to Poetry in Arabic in Nigeria Lateef Onireti Ibraheem	 129-144

Psychosocial Challenges of Disaster –Induced Internally Displaced Women in Lagos State

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Abstract

This study investigated the psychosocial challenges that confront disaster-induced internally displaced women in official camps in Lagos State. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 200 respondents. A well-structured questionnaire titled, "Psychosocial Challenges of Disaster-induced Internally Displaced Women Questionnaire" (PCDIDWQ) was used for gathering data for the study. A research question and two null hypotheses were tested using the t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics with a pre-set alpha of 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that family disintegration is the major psychosocial challenge of disaster-induced internally displaced women. It was equally revealed that there were no significant differences in the psychosocial challenges of respondents based on marriage type and number of children. Based on the findings of the study it was recommended that professional counsellors be actively involved in the provision of services such as trauma counselling, career counselling, and family counselling to disaster-induced internally displaced women. Also, counsellors should place special focus on psychosocial challenges like trauma confronting disaster-induced displaced women.

Keywords: Disaster-Induced; Internal Displacement; Psychosocial Challenges; Coping Strategies; Marginalization

Introduction

In recent times, internal displacement has become a global phenomenon. Individuals and families are forced to move from their long-term abode to new places due to factors beyond their control. Some of the factors are natural while others are man-made. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement broadly defined Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as persons forced or obliged to flee their residences for an array of reasons, such as the effects of conflicts, situation of

Psychosocial Challenges of Disaster –Induced Internally Displaced Women in Lagos State

generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or man-made disasters but have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (Kalin, 2008).

According to the United Nations (UN) (1999), Disaster-induced Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) refer to 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 natural or man-made disasters and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border. The UN (1999) identified three (3) main types of displacement and these are: (a) development-induced displacement (b) conflict-induced displacement (c) disaster-induced displacement. Development-induced displacement refers to the relocation of people due to development programmes such as industrialization, electrification, road expansion/construction and urbanization. Conflict-induced displacement is the forced and involuntary migration of people because of wars, confrontation, armed conflicts, terrorism, and violence. However, disaster-induced displacement implies a situation where people are forced to flee their homes suddenly or unexpectedly in large numbers as a result of natural or man-made disasters but who are still within the country.

In recent years Nigeria has recorded more damages of monumental proportions due to the impact of sudden disasters. The event of July 10, 2011 where flood ravaged the densely populated city of Lagos which led to the displacement of thousands of people, most especially women and children, was a terrible episode (Ajiboye, 2013). A similar incident occurred in February 2012 in which many women were rendered homeless and helpless in Lagos. There are other forms of disasters that significantly affected inhabitants of Lagos partly because of population and building densities. Such events include fire outbreaks, collapsed buildings and at times plane crashes which usually lead to destruction of houses. Whenever there is occurrence of disaster-induced displacement, women are often susceptible to various degree of psychosocial devastation which ranges from family disintegration, to all forms of post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD). According to Ferris (2012), both natural and man-made disasters are devastating because of the magnitude of negative impacts they exert on the affected society.

Ferris (2012) and Ferris and Stark (2012) grouped natural disasters into three sub-categories while human made disasters were grouped into two sub-categories. The sub-set of natural disasters are sudden impact disasters which include floods, earthquakes, tidal waves, tropical storms and others; and slow-onset disasters, which are those catastrophic events such as droughts, famine, environmental degradation, and epidemic Diseases such as cholera outbreak, ebola, measles, HIV/AIDS and the likes. The sub-set of human-made disasters are Industrial/Technological Disasters, which include spillage of hazardous materials, explosions (such as the event of Ikeja Military cantonment explosion in Lagos in 2012); and complex emergencies such as war or internal conflicts. All these outcomes impact most especially on women who are often vulnerable to disasters. Disasters are global phenomena that occur across the continents of the world.

According to Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC, 2012), from 1994 to 1999, disasters averaged 459 per year and from 2000 to 2004, the figure shot up by two-thirds to an average 728 disaster events across the globe each year. The trend has continually witnessed dramatic increases occasioned by different factors which range from geophysical, meteorological, hydrological, climatological to biological. The frequency and severity of these events vary from region to region and country to country. Chinedu (2009) revealed that in 2007 about 5,650 were displaced by floods in Nigeria with women and children most affected. The study further reported that, earlier in 1999 and 2000 more than 200,000 people were displaced in Niger State due to sudden impact disasters while two-thirds of Bayelsa State and half of Delta State were inundated by devastating floods for at least a quarter of each year. In the year 2010, an estimated 258,000 Nigerians were displaced by various flood disasters of which more than two-thirds were women (National Emergency Management Agency, 2011).

Displaced women in particular, according to Ajiboye (2012), are often faced with enormous problems which include, loss of livelihood, poverty, sexual harassment, hostility, frustration, depression, emotional numbing, re-experiencing of the traumatic events, isolation and others. Displacement often leaves in its trail various challenges that pose overwhelming discomfort to its victims. Cernea (2004) in his impoverishment risk and reconstruction model proposed that the onset of impoverishment can be represented through a model of eight interlinked potential risks intrinsic to displacement. These include the following challenges: (a) Loss of lands (b) Loss of jobs (c) Loss of shelter (d) Marginalization (e) Increased morbidity and mortality (f) Loss of Access to Common Property and (g) Social Disintegration.

Furthermore, Dada (2009) discovered that displaced persons are faced with the following problems: (a) communication problem which is on 'how to get in touch with their relations'; (b) educational problem which is based on 'how to obtain sponsorships for their children's education'; (c) economic problem which centers on 'how to engage in productive economic activities in spite of the limited capital'; (d) accommodation problem which is based on 'how to make optimal use of the limited room space' and (e) health problem which is hinged on 'how to make judicious use of limited medical facilities that are available.'

Statement of the Problem

Internal displacement resulting from disaster is often manifested when large numbers of people are forced from their homes due to instances of flooding, storms, fire accidents, collapsed buildings and explosions. Between 2012 and 2014, Nigeria witnessed unprecedented scale of internal displacement of persons which resulted from rainstorms and inferno especially in the major cities (Ajiboye, 2013). Each time a disaster displaces families, women are often at the receiving end because of the ominous traditional responsibilities of looking after the children, ensuring that the house wares are in good condition and coordinating re-settlement. Family disintegration, which is a common feature of disaster-induced internal displacement,

Psychosocial Challenges of Disaster –Induced Internally Displaced Women in Lagos State

can bring an untold psychosocial challenge in women in particular. Durosaro and Ajiboye (2012) found that internally displaced adolescents in Jos encountered educational problems. Psycho-social challenges peculiar to displacement include, family breakup, loss of contact with friends, loss of jobs, insecurity, loss of rights e.g. territorial and political. This study thus investigated psychosocial challenges of disaster induced internally displaced women in Lagos.

Lagos is a densely populated city due to the bee hive of commercial activities and it is located on the coast of an ocean thereby predisposing it to flood. The commercial and industrial activities in this city are also significant factors responsible for various disasters which have occurred over the years and may continue to occur. Individuals residing in Lagos hustle for their livelihood thereby resulting to an individualistic life pattern. The situation becomes survival of the fittest in which women could be disadvantaged in terms of social benefits. Displaced women are therefore more susceptible to neglect, sexual harassment and other ignoble treatments because the men who should be providing support are equally engaged in survival feats in the commercial city.

Research Questions

1. What are the psycho-social challenges of disaster-induced internally displaced women?
2. Is there any significant difference in the psycho-social challenges of disaster-induced internally displaced women based on type of marriage?
3. Is there any significant difference in the psycho-social challenges of internally displaced women based on number of children?

Methods

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design while the target population consisted of all disaster-induced internally displaced women found in official campuses in Lagos state. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 200 participants as the sample for the study. A well-structured questionnaire titled, "Psychosocial Challenge of Disaster-induced Internally Displaced Women Questionnaire" (PCDIPWQ) was used to collect data. The instrument had two sections i.e. Section A for demographic data and section B contains statements eliciting responses on the psychosocial challenges of disaster-induced internally displaced women. Each of the items of Section B consists of four response categories of; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The split-half technique and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient formula were used to establish the reliability of the instrument, which yielded a coefficient of 0.72. Frequency counts, Mean, Standard Deviation, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics were used to analyze the data collected.

Results**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Marriage Type**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Marriage Types		
Monogamous	118	59.0
Polygamous	82	41.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Number of Children

Number of Children	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 3 children	97	48.5
4 – 6 children	74	37.0
7 – 9 children	21	10.5
Above 9 children	8	4.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Duration of Displacement

Duration of Displacement	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 14 days	22	11
15 – 28 days	24	12
Above 28 days	154	77
Total	200	100.0

The result on Table 1 shows that respondents from monogamous marriages are more than those from polygamous marriages while respondents having 1 to 3 children are also the half of the total respondents. Those who have above 9 children are 4.0% of the total respondents in table 2. In table 3, 22 or 11% of the respondents have spent between 1 and 14 days, 24 (12%) have spent 15 – 28 days while 154 (77%) have spent more than 28 days as displaced persons.

Psychosocial Challenges of Disaster-Induced Internally Displaced Women in Lagos State

Research Question 1: What are the psychosocial challenges of disaster-induced internally displaced women?

Table 4: Mean and Rank Order on the Psycho-social Problems of Displaced Persons

Item No	As a disaster-induced internally displaced person, I experience:	Mean	Rank
1	Family disintegration	3.88	1 st
2	isolation	3.70	2 nd
8	emotional numbing	3.53	3 rd
10	sexual harassment	3.46	4 th
7	psychological trauma	3.18	5 th
13	violation of human rights	3.17	6 th
5	separation from loved ones	3.12	7 th
4	threat to life	2.94	8 th
9	family instability	2.93	9 th
15	difficulty relating to others	2.77	10 th
14	loss to community services	2.76	11 th
12	Marginalization	2.71	12 th
6	disruption of children's education	2.64	13 th
11	increased mortality	2.00	14 th
3	loss of employment	1.95	15 th

Table 4 showed that "I experience family disintegration" ranked highest followed by "I experience isolation" and I experience emotional numbing ranked 3rd. thirteen out of the fifteen items depict various forms of psychosocial challenges encountered by the respondents because the mean scores are above 2.50, the cut-off for decision since the response is patterned after the four-point Likert Scale Format. Thus other major psycho-social challenges encountered by disaster-induced internally displaced women are sexual harassment, psychological trauma, violation of human rights, separation from the loved ones, threat to life, family instability, difficulty in relating to others, loss of community services, marginalization and disruption of children's education. These findings support the earlier studies of Dada (2008) and Ajiboye (2013) where it was established that internally displaced persons are often faced with categories of problems ranging from psychological, health to social. Disaster-induced internally displaced women could be experiencing many psycho-social challenges because of the sudden nature of the events preceeding their displacement as well as enormity of devastation which may overwhelm the coping capacity of the victims in particular and the close relatives.

Research Question 2: Is there any significant difference in the psycho-social challenges of disaster-induced internally displaced women based on marriage type?

Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value on the Psycho-Social Challenges of Disaster-Induced Internally Displaced Women based on Marriage Type

Marriage Type	N	Mean	SD	df	P-value	Decision
Monogamous	118	47.70	4.911	198	0.11	Accepted
Polygamous	82	46.56	3.581			

Table 5 indicates that the calculated p-value is 0.11 while the alpha level is 0.05. Since the calculated p-value is greater than the alpha level, then there is no significant difference in the psycho-social challenges of disaster induced internally displaced women from both monogamous and polygamous marriages. The results in table 3 revealed that disaster-induced internally displaced women from both monogamous and polygamous marriages are similar in their psycho-social challenges. Cernea (2004) has earlier established that every displaced individual, irrespective of personal variables, is likely to experience similar psychological problems. It could therefore be adduced that, since the trauma and other consequences faced by displaced women are not marriage-bound the possibility of encountering similar psychosocial challenges is more certain.

Research Question 3: Is there any significant difference in the psycho-social problems confronting Disaster-induced internally displaced women based on number of children?

Table 6: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Psycho-social Challenges of Disaster-Induced Internally Displaced Women Based on Number of Children

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	P-value	Decision
Between Groups	158.58	3	79.29	0.09	Accepted
Within Groups	62.82	196	31.41		
Total	221.40	199			

Table 6 indicates that the calculated p-value is 0.09 while the alpha level is 0.05. Since the calculated p-value is greater than the alpha level, the hypothesis is accepted. Hence, the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the psycho-

Psychosocial Challenges of Disaster –Induced Internally Displaced Women in Lagos State

social challenges of disaster-induced internally displaced women based on number of children was accepted. The results of the ANOVA statistics in Table 4 revealed that respondents were similar in their psychosocial challenges irrespective of number of children possessed. This contradicts the findings of Ajiboye (2013) where internally displaced persons in Nigeria differed based on family size. The dissimilarity between the previous and the present studies could be as a result of difference in the type of respondents; the previous study was heterogeneous (male and female) while the present study is homogenous (female only).

Discussion of Findings

Table 4 revealed some psychosocial problems of disaster-induced internally displaced women. The most common problems are: family disintegration, isolation, emotional numbing, social harassment and psychological trauma. This finding supports the findings of Cernea (2004), Peck (2005) and NATO (2008) that internally displaced persons always suffer threat to life, bereavement, profound loss, as well as social, employment, school and community disruption.

It was also revealed in table 5 that disaster – induced internally displaced women from both monogamous and polygamous marriages did not differ significantly in their psychosocial challenges. Alechenu (2011) had earlier found that the major problem encountered by IDPs in China was loss of right to accommodation. The reasons for the similarity between the previous and the present studies could be that IDPs everywhere are susceptible to loss of shelter since they are usually forced to have their places of residence put on emergency.

Table 6 showed that there was no significant difference of psychosocial challenges of disaster – induced internally displaced women based on the number of children. This finding contradicts the submission of Yishau (2012) that the challenges of displacement are more pronounced on women with multiple children than those with few children to cater for.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, disaster-induced internally displaced women are faced with myriads of psychosocial challenges such as family disintegration, isolation, emotional numbing, sexual harassment, psychological trauma, violation of human rights, separation from loved ones, threat to life amongst others; but the most common is family disintegration. Thus, disaster induced displacement has both immediate and long term consequences on the wellbeing of affected women. This is because these psychosocial challenges which the respondents alluded to could be debilitating and overwhelm the coping skills of the victims.

Based on the findings of this study it was recommended that professional counsellors should be actively involved in identifying psychological and social challenges of internally displaced women, especially displacement occasioned by disasters. This will afford counsellors the opportunity to exercise expertise in handling various categories of problems encountered by displaced women, especially

psychosocial matters. It is also important that counsellors specifically pay adequate attention to psychosocial challenges of disaster-induced internally displaced women since the study revealed that they are faced with many problems of such nature. Counsellors should endeavor to adopt trauma counselling in order to solve the psychological effects of disasters which might have preceded the displacement of women. The Counsellors Association of Nigeria (CASSON) should collaborate with other agencies working on internal displacement to provide special psychological and social services for women displaced by disasters.

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Psychosocial Challenges of Disaster –Induced Internally Displaced Women in Lagos State

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