



Availability and Utilization of Counselling Services for Internally Displaced Persons in North-Central, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated availability and utilization of counseling services for internally displaced persons in North-Central, Nigeria. There were three research questions and two hypotheses formulated to guide the study. Design used for the study was descriptive survey. Population of the study comprised 128 counsellors in 128 IDP camps in the North-Central geopolitical zone while 97 counsellors were sampled for the study through random sampling technique. Taro Yamane minimum sample size determination technique was used to draw the sample for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a 10 item checklist titled "Available Counselling Services Checklist" and a 10-item questionnaire titled "Utilization of Counselling Services Questionnaire" (UCSQ). The instruments were validated by three experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, University of Port Harcourt. The reliability of the checklist was determined using Kuder Richardson KR-21 with an index of 0.75 while the reliability of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach Alpha with an index of 0.80. Data for the study was collected by the researcher with the assistance of seven trained Research Assistants. Research question one was answered using percentage while research questions two and three were answered using mean and standard deviation with rank order. The two hypotheses formulated were tested using z-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that most counseling services are unavailable for IDPs. It was equally revealed that counseling services are utilized to a low extent. Therefore, the recommended provision of adequate counseling services and resources and the public should equally be enlightened to utilize available services in IDP camps.

Keywords: Availability, Utilization, Counselling, Internally, Displaced,

INTRODUCTION

The rising cases of social, political and economic crisis affecting the society has continued to draw attention among stakeholders in the society. This is because the existence of these problems has continued to increase the level of casualties resulting in the rising number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the country. More pronounced among these problems is the issue of insecurity and economic crisis which has led to the mobility of people who have been kept in internally displaced persons camps. Furthermore, Akuto (2017:21) pointed out that:

The United Nations defined internally displaced persons as "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obligated to flee or to have cause to leave their homes or place of habitual residence in particular, as a result of or in order to avoid the effect of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural

or human-made disasters, and they must have either remain within their own national borders (as internally displaced persons) or they must have crossed an internationally recognized state border (as refugees).

Internally displaced persons are physically, psychologically and socially displaced as they have to relocate to refugees' camp and this emphasizes the need for counseling for such people (Akuto, 2017). The displacement of citizens from their original place of residence has a lot of social and psychological consequences on the victims and this can have disastrous consequences on these individuals if left unchecked.

It was pointed out by Lenshie and Yenda(2016) that in Nigeria alone, there are over 3,000,000 people who are living in internally displaced camps across the country. Furthermore, with the rising cases of insurgency in the country, more persons are being forced to live in IDP camps which are scattered across major towns and cities especially in the Northern part of the country. These individuals are forced to adjust to cope with their new lifestyle which may not be convenient for some of the dwellers. This is why counseling service is imperative across all the IDP camps in the country.

The need for counseling services in IDP camps across the country cannot be overemphasized as this is required to help these individuals cope with their new life as well as bounce back to a better life in the shortest period of time. There are different counseling services that can be provided for these individuals depending on the challenges that they are facing at present. The provision and availability of these counseling services is very vital for these IDPs to live a meaningful life. Freibergová, Fantová, Goulliová and Menclová (2003) identified counseling services that can help in quick rehabilitation of IDPs include professional counseling, personal counseling, academic counseling, psychotherapeutic counseling, training counseling and consultation counseling. These services are important for them to adjust on time and life meaningfully.

Modo, Sanni, Uwah and Mogbo (2013:44) concurred with this position when they asserted that in guidance and counselling profession there are many services that the professional counsellor renders to the community and they include; educational, vocational and personal social services. The essence of providing these services is to equip these IDPs both pragmatically and cognitively. This forms part of what is required to make these individuals live, benefit and contribute to the development of the society.

Statement of the Problem

The need for the counseling of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in various IDP camps is an issue that cannot be overemphasized. There are so many ugly experiences that have been reported in IDPs camps such as cases of death, rape as well as other psychological issues such as depression and stress. The implication of these problems is that the physical, mental and emotional strength of these individuals will continue to deteriorate and this has great implication not only on the society but also relatives of these affected by these problems.

In addition to the above the increase in the number IDP camps in the country has continued to increase the level of dependence on the government as well as private individuals. Furthermore, increase in the number of IDP camps in the country is also creating demographic problems in the host communities such as population explosion and excessive pressure on economic resources. Leaving this problem uncontrolled can have devastating economic, social and demographic problems on the society in the long run. The rise in these problems therefore calls for the need for counseling services so as to address all of these problems. The study therefore intends to find out the availability of counseling services and the utilization of these services in Internally Displaced Persons camps in North Central, Nigeria. This is the problem that this study intends to investigate.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the availability and utilization of counselling services for internally displaced persons in North Central, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. find out the counseling services available for internally displaced persons in North Central, Nigeria
2. determine the extent of utilization of counseling by internally displaced persons in North Central, Nigeria
3. examine the counseling services challenges faced by internally displaced persons in North Central, Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the counseling services available for internally displaced persons in North Central, Nigeria?
2. What are the extent of utilization of counseling by internally displaced persons in North Central, Nigeria?
3. What are the counseling services challenges faced by internally displaced persons in North Central, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female internally displaced persons on the extent of utilization of counseling by them in North Central, Nigeria
2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female internally displaced persons on the counseling services challenges faced by them in North Central, Nigeria

Literature Review

Availability of Counselling Services

There is no doubt that one of the places where counseling services if of great importance is among people who have suffered a social, economic or psychological challenge such as those in IDP camps. However, it is not the existence of a counseling unit in these areas that matter but the quality and quantity of counseling services provided for the quick recovery of these victims. This goes a long way in the total recuperation of these individuals. It is therefore the responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure the provision of all resources needed for professional counseling to be provided for internally displaced persons.

Mogbo, Obumneke-Okeke and Anyachebelu (2011) was of the opinion that one of the ways of achieving availability of counseling services is by providing adequate financial and human resources. It is through this measure that adequate counseling services can be provided for all levels of people across different levels of the society. This is because; for counseling services to be provided as expected, there must be the availability of the needed human and material resources. This is where finance plays a major role and when this is done, a complete counseling services package can be provided for all categories of internally displaced persons irrespective of differences in their economic, educational, social and physical orientation.

Counselling services may not be provided when the needed resources for work are not available. Mogbo, Obumneke-Okeke and Anyachebelu (2011:363) opined that for a counselor to carry out his work professionally;

The Counselor should be given a standard office located in a place where privacy is possible. At least two rooms should be provided, the clerical staff room and the consulting room for counseling. The office should be modestly furnished and comfortable. The basic furniture provision expected in such an office are as follows; Bulletin Board or Notice Board, Bookshelves, Suggestion box for students to slot in their needs and concerns. Special cabinets for storing and retrieving students cumulative record folders. Filing cabinets for files. Audiovisual materials such as projectors, computers, radio and cassettes. Connection to internet facilities/school net. Computer Discs (CDs), empty tapes, desks and laptops. A small library shelf with books, magazines, journals, newspapers and career/vocational information guides.

According to Udoh and George (2014:1528), counseling services vary in orientation, style and skill required and all of these are geared towards returning victims back to their normal life. This is why all aspects of counseling must be touched in order for victims to be re-integrated fully into the society for a productive life. The counseling services that must therefore be provided as suggested by counseling scholars include; professional counseling for career development, personal counseling for private problems, psychotherapeutic counseling, training counseling, consultation counseling, spiritual

counseling, health counseling among others. These services are important for the future comfort of IDPs.

Utilization and Challenges of Counseling Services

Utilizing available counseling services is an important step towards the overall freedom of victims of social and economic problems living in IDP camps. Shrivastava (2003) opined that the essence of counseling is to help people become socially adequate and economically productive persons. However, this goal cannot be achieved when these services are not accessed and utilized. It is therefore important for the needed physical and material to be sufficiently provided and placed at the reach of these IDPs in order for it to be utilized.

Insufficient information can limit the utilization of counseling services. Ndegwa (2013) revealed that people fail to utilize counseling services when the counselor had a vague understanding of what the profession is all about. In addition to this both the counselor and the counseling unit should provide adequate information that will help the IDPs to understand the services available and how it can be of benefit to them. Similarly, stakeholders in need to be fully involved in the provision of counseling services as this will provide a robust programme that will be of benefit to all IDPs. Lack of involvement of stakeholders also limits the utilization of counseling services and as such stakeholders play a significant role in providing an enabling environment that will help them utilize the services provided.

The personal attributes of victims especially when they are faced with such unpleasant situation can also contribute to their determination not to utilize available services. In addition, the personal attribute of the counselor can also limit their utilization of such services. Udoh and George (2014:1532) opined that every counselor should be acquainted with the following: psychodynamic psychotherapy, Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), humanistic/existential therapy, mindfulness (CBT), postmodern therapy, family systems therapy, person-centered therapy, existential therapy, gestalt therapy and eclectic techniques. Access and utilization of counseling services is therefore determined by the attributes of the various stakeholders as well as the environment. This will go a long way in increasing the level of utilization of these counseling services.

The challenges confronting victims use of counseling services varies from place to place. Aside the material challenges that limit the use of counseling services, the experience of counsellors can also pose a challenge to victim's access to counseling services. Aluede, McEachern and Kennym (2005) opined that factors limiting counseling service include a greater emphasis on specialization, credentialing and licensing in the USA. Issues such as lack of insurance coverage and general economic disadvantage also pose a challenge to the use of counseling services. These challenges need to be addressed for it to make positive impact on IDPs across the country.

Egbo (2015) summarized by classifying the challenges of counseling services to include those induced by the government such as inadequate funding, those from the counselor such as attitude and qualification as well as those from the counselee such as lack of awareness. This implies that the challenges to availability and adequacy of counseling services is multi-faced and as such require a comprehensive and all inclusive approach to deal with these challenges.

METHODOLOGY

The design adopted for the study was descriptive survey. The population of the study comprised 128 counsellors in 128 IDP camps in the North-Central geopolitical zone out of which 97 counsellors were sampled for the study using random sampling technique. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane minimum sample size determination technique. The instrument used for data collection was a 10 item checklist titled "Available Counselling Services Checklist" and a 10-item questionnaire titled "Utilization of Counselling Services Questionnaire" (UCSQ). The instruments were validated by three experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, University of Port Harcourt. Cronbach The reliability of the checklist was determined using Kuder Richardson KR-21 with an index of 0.75 while the reliability of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach Alpha with an index of 0.80. Data for the study was collected by the researcher and seven Research Assistants. Research question one was answered using percentage while research question two and three were answered using mean and standard deviation. The two hypotheses formulated were tested using z-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question One: *What are the counseling services available for internally displaced persons in North Central, Nigeria?*

Table 1: Percentage score of the counseling services available for internally displaced persons in North Central, Nigeria

S/No	Item	Available		Not Available	
		n	%	n	%
1	Academic counseling	21	21.6	76	78.4
2	Spiritual counseling	9	9.3	88	90.7
3	Career counseling	35	36.1	62	63.9
4	Social counseling	79	81.4	18	18.6
5	Psychotherapeutic counseling	18	18.6	79	81.4
6	Health Counselling	62	63.9	35	36.1
7	Training counseling	13	13.4	84	86.6
8	Emotional counseling	72	74.2	25	25.8
9	Marital counseling	48	49.5	49	50.5
10	Financial counseling	13	13.4	84	86.6
Average		370	38.1	600	61.9

Table 1 showed the counseling services in the 97 IDP camps in North-Central, Nigeria. Counselling services were available in these camps in the order of academic counseling, spiritual counseling, career counseling, social counseling, psychotherapeutic counseling, health counseling, training counseling, emotional counseling, marital counseling and financial counseling at 21.6% (21camps), 9.3% (9camps), 36.1% (35camps), 81.4% (79camps), 18.6% (18camps), 63.9% (62camps), 13.4%(13camps), 74.2%(72camps), 49.5%(48camps) and 13.4%(13camps) respectively. This implies that other camps do not have these services provided in that order. Summarily, the rate of availability of counseling services in these camps was 38.1% which revealed that counseling facilities are not sufficiently available for internally displaced persons in the study area.

Research Question Two: *What is the extent of utilization of counseling by internally displaced persons in North Central, Nigeria?*

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation score of the extent of utilization of counseling by internally displaced persons in North Central, Nigeria

S/No	Item	Mean	SD	Rank	Remark
11	IDPs know the location of the counselling unit in their camps	2.94	0.66	1 st	High Extent
12	Members of the camp come to the counselor for counseling services	2.36	0.72	4 th	Low Extent
13	All members of the camp have benefitted from available counseling services	2.45	0.90	3 rd	Low Extent
14	IDPs adhere to the schedule fixed by counselors	2.47	0.89	2 nd	High Extent
15	Counselors have regular scheduled visit from their counselees	2.18	0.94	5 th	Low Extent
Average		2.48	0.82		High Extent

Table 2 revealed the responses of the respondents on the extent of utilization of counseling services by internally displaced persons in the study area. Items 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 provided mean scores of 2.94, 2.36, 2.45, 2.90 and 2.18. Items 11 and 14 had mean scores which were above the criterion mean score of 2.50 used for decision making and as such showed high extent to the items raised while items 12, 13 and 15 had mean scores below the criterion mean score of 2.50 implying a low extent to the item raised. Furthermore, item 11 ranked 1st while item 15th ranked 5th on the extent of utilization of counseling services. Summarily, with an average mean score of 2.48, it implied that counseling services were utilized to a low extent by internally displaced persons.

Research Question Three: *What are the counseling services challenges faced by internally displaced persons in North Central, Nigeria?*

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation score of the challenges faced by internally displaced persons in North Central, Nigeria

S/No	Item	Mean	SD	Rank	Remark
16	Inadequacy of facilities for professional counseling service	3.17	0.56	1 st	High Extent
17	There is shortage of qualified counselors	2.94	0.66	2 nd	High Extent
18	Lack of information on counselling services	2.93	0.75	3 rd	High Extent
19	Attitude of the counselors	2.18	0.84	5 th	Low Extent
20	Lack of political will from the government	2.90	0.79	4 th	High Extent
	Average	2.82	0.72		

Table 3 showed that items 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 had mean scores of 3.17, 2.94, 2.93, 2.18 and 2.90 respectively. Items 16, 17, 18 and 20 with mean scores above the criterion mean implied that the items raised agree as challenges to a very high extent while item 19 with mean score of 2.18 agree that the item raised is a challenge to a low extent. Furthermore, item 16 ranked 1st among the challenges while item 19 ranked 5th in the order stated above. Summarily, with an average mean score of 2.82, it implied that almost all the items raised are challenges faced by internally displaced persons in their access to counseling services in North-Central, Nigeria.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female internally displaced persons on the extent of utilization of counseling by them in North Central, Nigeria

Table 4: z-test analysis of the significant difference between the mean scores of male and female internally displaced persons on the extent of utilization of counseling by them in North Central, Nigeria

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level of significance	Decision
Male Counsellors	35	2.56	0.77					H ₀ was not rejected
Female Counsellors	62	2.40	0.87	95	0.94	1.96	0.05	

In table 4, it was revealed that the value of z-cal. was 0.94 while the value of z-crit. was 1.96. Therefore, since the value of z-cal. of 0.94 is less than the value of z-crit. of 1.96, the null hypothesis was not rejected implying that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female internally displaced persons on the extent of utilization of counseling by them in North Central, Nigeria

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female internally displaced persons on the counseling services challenges faced by them in North Central, Nigeria

Table 5: z-test analysis of the significant difference between the mean scores of male and female internally displaced persons on the counseling services challenges faced by them in North Central, Nigeria

Variable	n	Mean	SD	df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level of significance	Decision
Male Counsellors	35	2.96	0.64					H ₀ was not rejected
Female Counsellors	62	2.68	0.80	95	1.65	1.96	0.05	

Table 5 showed that the value of z-cal. was 1.65 while the value of z-crit. was 1.96. Therefore, since the value of z-cal. of 1.65 is less than the value of z-crit. of 1.96, the null hypothesis was not rejected indicating that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female internally displaced persons on the counseling services challenges faced by them in North Central, Nigeria

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Available Counselling Services for Internally Displaced Persons in North Central, Nigeria

It was revealed from the responses of counselors used for the study that some essential counseling services required by internally displaced persons in the study area are sparingly provided. This implies that IDPs do not have access to sufficient counseling services while they are in the camp. It was revealed in the study that counseling services that are sufficiently available in these camps are mainly social counseling, health counseling and emotional counseling. The other counseling services which are needed are not adequately provided for IDPs in some of the camps. This situation may be due to the shortage of personnel in these camps or the lack of material resources needed for these services. Surprisingly, the findings of this study tells the same direction with the outcome of the study conducted by Enwereji (2009) where it was revealed that in IDP camps in Abia State, none of the organizations, including governmental institutions, provided social services or assistance in prevention of HIV/AIDS to internally displaced persons. The main services provided by 17 (68%) organizations to 43 (78.2%) of internally displaced persons were provision of food, clothing and money, but these were provided on an ad hoc basis. Only 3 organizations (12%) included spiritual counseling and resolution of communal conflicts in their services. This shows a gross shortage in counseling services among displaced people in various camps across the country.

The summary of the study revealed that there is 38.1% availability of counseling services in IDP camps in the study area with 61.9% level of unavailability. However, the reason for this may be as a result of the low attention given to these camps by the government and other stakeholders. This may have resulted to shortage of resources needed for providing these services. This position was supported from the outcome of the findings conducted by Tata (2016) which reported that resources for counselling are grossly unavailable in the secondary schools. It was revealed that there was no significant difference between paracounsellors of public and private secondary schools ($Z = -0.86, p = 0.36$). Similarly, there is no significant difference in availability of counselling resources between paracounsellors of Urban and Rural secondary schools ($Z = -0.76, p = 0.45$). The study also showed that there is no significant difference in availability of counselling resources between paracounsellors of day and boarding secondary schools ($Z = -1.83, p = 0.7$) as well as no significant difference in utilization of counselling resources between paracounsellors of public and private secondary schools ($Z = -0.93, p = 0.35$). These findings revealed the ugly state of counseling services in most public institutions as a result of shortage of counseling resources. This needs to be corrected if counseling services must be appreciated and utilized by the members of the public.

Utilization of Counselling Services by Internally Displaced Persons in North-Central, Nigeria

Despite the importance of counseling, it was revealed in the study that the respondents revealed that internally displaced persons have not fully utilized the counseling services available in camps in the study area. However, it was not be wrong to say that IDPs have failed to utilize counseling services because the services provided do not meet their expectation. This calls for the need for a proper assessment by stakeholders on services that will be of benefit to IDPs which they can be educated on how to benefit from such services. It was revealed from the findings of study conducted by Odusanya (2016) which reported that sickness and malnutrition are common place in IDP camps. Therefore, counseling services should be provided on how to address these social problems if the services provided must be utilized.

In a similar dimension, a related study conducted by Ajibade, Ajao, Amoo, Akintola and Adeniran (2017) showed that the types of traumatic experienced by the respondents included evaluation from home which was experienced by 84.8%, followed by lack of food. In term of the way they responded to traumatic events, 13.4% experienced being jumpy. The coping style widely accepted positive reinterpretation and social support. The government needs to look into these areas to ensure that counseling is provided in this direction as this will go a long way to address the problems of the IDPs. It is a service that solves the problem of the IDPs that will most likely be patronized. In addition to this, there is need for IDPs to also be sensitized appropriately on the benefit of utilizing available services in their camps as this will go a long way in minimizing their plight in the long run.

Counseling Services Challenges faced by Internally Displaced Persons in North Central, Nigeria

The challenges to assess to counseling services in most IDP camps are multi-faceted. There are challenges induced by the government and those induced by the counselor and those from the counselee. Supporting this position as revealed in this study, Wadabe, Salleh, Ahmad and Jamil (2018) conducted a research where it was found that, the IDPs in Nigeria suffered from multifaceted

problems, ranging from the issues of inadequate life-saving assistance, protection related crisis, and the unclear prospect of achieving durable solutions. This points to the absence of the right quality and quantity of human and material counseling resources. As such, those with counseling needs in the camps may prefer to use external services than utilize the services provided on the camp because the environment is not properly equipped.

The findings of the study supported the idea that counseling challenges are as a result of factors induced by the counsellor such as their attitude as well as the lack of orientation of the counselee. Supporting this idea, Eliamani, Richard and Peter (2014) reported in the findings of their study that although no trained counselor was found, the services offered proved to be moderately effective in influencing students' study life; and effective in shaping students' attitude towards studies and career choice. Out of 152 student respondents, only 10(6.6%) reported that they have not been counseled at any moment. Accessing the services showed significant correlation with students' attitude towards studies and career choice ($p = 0.00$ at $\alpha = 0.05$). Likewise, significant relationship was observed between students' attitude towards studies and career choice ($p = 0.015$ at $\alpha = 0.05$). It was concluded that accessing guidance and counseling services has an effect in shaping students' attitude towards studies and career choice. This study reveals the benefit that can be derived from setting up a professional counseling unit for IDPs. However, these advantages can be eroded when the environment is not suitable. Therefore, the government is expected to train qualified counselors and deploy them to IDP camps. In addition to this, adequate materials for counseling services should be provided and the beneficiaries of such services should be properly oriented as this will go a long way in revamping the condition of IDPs who have fled their locality as a result of social problems.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that:

Internally displaced persons in camps situated in North-Central Nigeria do not utilize the counseling services provided for them in various camps in the study area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made:

1. The government should make effort to employ and train more counselors who will provide counseling services in various areas for internally displaced persons in camps across the country. This will help to hasten the recovery process of these individuals for personal and societal growth and development.
2. Internally displaced persons in different camps in the country should be encouraged through public enlightenment to utilize counseling services provided for them in various camps in the country. This will help them recover from various psychological, physical and social challenges that they may be encountering.
3. Private and public individuals should assist IDP camps with the facilities needed to provide robust counseling services for IDPs. This will help in the provision of robust counseling services.

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