

Emotional Trauma and Mental Health among Internally Displaced Persons in Bayelsa State

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between emotional trauma and mental health among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State Nigeria. A total of two research question and two null hypotheses guided the study, the study adopted correlational research design. A sample of 120 internally displaced persons, mainly adults were randomly selected from the major IDPS camp in Bayelsa State. A self-designed instrument Titled: Emotional Trauma and Mental Health Questionnaire (ETMHQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was dully validated by expert from the department, which the internal consistency was determined using Cronbach alpha statistics. it gave a value of 0.873 which was considered adequate and highly reliable for the study, the analysis of the research questions were carried out using mean and standard deviation while person product moment correlation co-efficient was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level the findings of the study revealed a significant relationship between emotional trauma and mental health among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State. It was however recommended that internally displaced persons should be provided with adequate health and social services to enhance their living standard.

Keywords: Emotional Trauma, Mental Health, Internally Displaced Persons in Bayelsa State.

Introduction

The experience of being a refugee is often marked by exposure to traumatic events, including violence, displacement, loss of loved ones, and uncertainty about the future. These traumatic experiences can have a profound impact on an individual's mental health, leading to a range of psychological and emotional difficulties (Miller & Rasmussen, 2010). Research has consistently shown that internally displaced persons are at a higher risk of developing mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety disorders (Papadopoulos, 2007). The relationship between trauma and mental health among internally displaced persons is complex and multifaceted, influenced by a range of factors, including the nature and severity of the traumatic events, individual resilience and coping mechanisms, and the

social and cultural context in which they occur (WHO, 2018). Understanding this relationship is crucial for developing effective interventions to support the mental health and well-being of internally displaced persons. In Bayelsa State, Nigeria, internally displaced persons from various countries have fled conflict, persecution, and violence, bringing with them unique experiences and challenges. The state's refugee population presents a critical opportunity to investigate the relationship between trauma and mental health, with implications for counseling interventions that can inform policy, practice, and humanitarian responses. By exploring the trauma-mental health nexus among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of research on refugee mental health, while also providing insights that can inform the development of targeted interventions to support the mental health and well-being of this vulnerable population.

Statement of the Problem

Internally displaced persons often experience traumatic events, leading to increased risk of mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety disorders (Miller & Rasmussen, 2010). Despite growing research on refugee mental health, there is a paucity of studies investigating the relationship between trauma and mental health among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. This lack of research hinders the development of targeted counseling interventions tailored to the specific needs of internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State. Existing studies emphasize the importance of culturally sensitive and trauma-informed interventions (Papadopoulos, 2007), but more research is needed to inform effective practice. The absence of context-specific research in Bayelsa State limits the ability to design and implement effective counseling interventions, potentially exacerbating the mental health challenges faced by internally displaced persons. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the relationship between trauma and mental health among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State, exploring implications for counseling interventions.

Purpose of the Study

1. To investigate the relationship between emotional trauma and mental health among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State.
2. To explore the impact of psychological trauma on mental health outcomes among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State, with implications for counseling interventions.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between emotional trauma and mental health symptoms (e.g., anxiety, depression) among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State?
2. Does psychological trauma predict mental health outcomes (e.g., PTSD, depression) among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State, and what implications does this have for counseling interventions?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant positive correlation between emotional trauma and mental health symptoms (e.g., anxiety, depression) among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State.
2. Internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State who experience higher levels of psychological trauma will not exhibit poorer mental health outcomes (e.g., higher PTSD symptoms, depression), controlling for other factors.

Conceptual Review

The relationship between trauma and mental health among internally displaced persons is a critical area of study, particularly in regions like Bayelsa State. Internally displaced persons often experience traumatic events, including violence, displacement, and loss, which can significantly impact their mental health.

Understanding Trauma

Trauma can be defined as an event or series of events that are experienced as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening, having lasting adverse effects on an individual's functioning. There are two key variables to consider:

- **Emotional Trauma:** Emotional trauma refers to the psychological response to a distressing event, which can affect an individual's emotional well-being and relationships.
- **Psychological Trauma:** Psychological trauma involves the cognitive and emotional processing of traumatic events, potentially leading to long-term mental health consequences.

Relationship between Trauma and Mental Health

Research suggests that internally displaced persons who experience trauma are at a higher risk of developing mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The impact of trauma on mental health can be influenced by various factors, such as cultural background, resilience, and access to support services.

Implications for Counseling Interventions

Counseling interventions can play a crucial role in addressing trauma and promoting mental health among internally displaced persons. Some potential approaches include:

- **Trauma-Focused Interventions:** These interventions specifically target the traumatic experiences and symptoms associated with PTSD.
- **Psychosocial Approaches:** These approaches focus on promoting overall well-being, social support, and coping skills.
- **Culturally Sensitive Interventions:** These interventions take into account the cultural background and values of the refugee population, ensuring that services are accessible and effective.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by the Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) framework and the Cognitive Processing Theory (CPT).

Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) emphasizes understanding trauma's impact on individuals and providing care that acknowledges and respects this experience (Hopper, Bassuk, & Olivet, 2010). TIC's core principles include safety, trust, choice, collaboration, and empowerment.

Cognitive Processing Theory (CPT) posits that traumatic experiences disrupt cognitive processing, leading to negative emotions and maladaptive behaviors (Resick & Schnicke, 1992). CPT suggests that effective interventions should challenge negative thoughts and process traumatic memories.

Relevance to the Study

The TIC and CPT frameworks are relevant to this study because they:

1. Inform understanding of trauma Providing a foundation for understanding emotional and psychological trauma's impact on internally displaced persons' mental health.
2. Guide intervention development: Informing the development of effective counseling interventions tailored to internally displaced persons' needs.
3. Emphasize cultural sensitivity: Highlighting the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity in providing trauma-informed care.

Empirical Studies

Studies have shown that internally displaced persons who have experienced traumatic events, displacement, and post-migration stress are more likely to develop mental health issues.

Prevalence of Mental Health Issues

A systematic review and meta-analysis found that internally displaced persons experience high levels of mental disorders, with higher rates among those with lower education levels, shorter duration of journey, and exposure to war-related contexts.

Research on internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria reported PTSD prevalence rates among IDPs in Kaduna and conflict-affected communities in Cross River State.

Risk Factors - Trauma exposure, displacement, and post-migration stress are significant predictors of mental health issues among internally displaced persons (Schlaudt *et al.*, 2020).

Independent predictors of PTSD include depression, witnessing death of a family member, and experiencing traumatic events.

Impact of Trauma on Mental Health

Traumatic experiences can have a profound impact on internally displaced persons' mental health, leading to symptoms of PTSD, depression, and anxiety.

Internally displaced persons who experience post-resettlement traumas are more likely to develop mental health problems.

Implications for Counseling Interventions - Effective counseling interventions for internally displaced persons should address trauma-related symptoms, promote emotional regulation, and foster resilience.

Trauma-informed care approaches, such as narrative exposure therapy (NET) and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), can be beneficial in reducing PTSD symptoms and improving mental health outcomes (Neuner *et al.*, 2018; Wright *et al.*, 2020).

Methodology

Research Design: The research design adopted was a correlational design which seek to establish the relationship between the two variables,

Population of the Study: The study population comprised of all the 540 adults internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State.

Sample and Sampling Technique: A sample of 120 respondents were randomly selected using the ballot by replacement technique.

Instrumentation: The instrument used for the study was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire is known as Emotional Trauma and Mental Health Questionnaire (ETMHQ). The instrument has two parts, the first part elicited information on the demographic data of respondents, while the second part dealt with the questionnaire items. The response option used are strongly Agree, Disagree and strongly Disagree.

Validity of the Instrument: Experts from the department of measurement and evaluation validated the data collection instrument to ensure that it measures what it is supposed to measure.

Reliability of Instrument: The reliability coefficient index of 0.87 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha Statistics.

Method of Data Analysis: The data collected from research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while the hypothesis were tested using person product moment correlation coefficient at 0.05 alpha level.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between Emotional Trauma and mental health symptoms among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores on the relationship between emotional trauma and mental health.

S/N	Questionnaire	Sum	X	Sd	Remarks
1	Emotional trauma impacts on mental health and potentially leading to condition such as PTSD and depression.	360	3.000	1.732	Agreed
2	Internally displaced persons who experience post resettlement trauma are more likely to develop mental health issues.	348	2.901	1.703	Agreed
3	IDPs who experience traumatic events due to development are more likely to develop mental health issues.	374	3.116	1.765	Agreed
4	People who experience traumatic event may also experience depression panic, disorder and substance abuse.	352	3.016	1.736	Agreed

Data analysis on table 1 revealed that items 1-4 had all the mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.5 showing that emotional trauma related with mental health symptoms through its impact by leading to conditions such as PTSD and depression. The IDPS also experience emotional trauma through resettlement from their homes which affects their mental wellbeing.

Research Question 2: Does psychological trauma predict mental health outcomes among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation scores on how psychological trauma predicts mental health outcomes.

S/N	Questionnaire items	Sum	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
5	People who experience psychological trauma result to aggression and impulsiveness.	366	3.057	1.746	Agreed
6	Most people who experience psychology trauma often have problem in associating with others.	353	2.941	1.714	Agreed
7	Psychological trauma impacts on our ability to think or learn.	356	2.966	1.722	Agreed
8	Psychological trauma affects peoples' ability to manage stress and access support services.	380	3.166	1.779	Agreed

Data analysis on table 2 revealed that items 5-8 has all the mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.5, showing that psychological trauma predicts mental health outcomes by resulting to aggressive behavior and impulsiveness and people's inability to manage stress and have access to support services.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between emotional trauma and mental health symptoms among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State.

Table 3: Test of relationship between emotional trauma and mental health symptom.

Variables	N	X	SD	r	P	Remarks
Emotional trauma	70	2.950	1.717			Not sig
				0.56	0.16	
Mental Health	50	3.066	1,750			

The findings presented in table 3 showed a non-significant relationship between emotional trauma and mental health symptoms among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State ($r = 0.56$; $P > 0.05$) and this revealed the rejection of the null hypothesis. Hence, there is a significant relationship between emotional trauma and mental health symptoms among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State.

Hypotheses 2: There is no significant relationship between psychological trauma and mental health outcomes among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State.

Table 4: Test of relationship between psychological trauma and mental health outcomes.

Variables	N	X	SD	R	P	Remarks
Psychological Trauma	70	2.996	1.730			Not sig
				0.78	0.28	
Mental Health	50	3.066	1.733			

The study findings presented in table 4 showed a non-significant relationship between psychological trauma and mental health outcome ($r = 0.78$, $p > 0.05$) and it revealed the rejection of the posited null hypotheses. Hence, there is a significant relationship between psychological trauma and mental health outcomes among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State.

Discussion of Results

The findings of the study presented in research question one and hypotheses one revealed that there is a significant relationship between emotional trauma and mental health symptoms among internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State, and that emotionally traumatized person exhibit post-traumatic stress disorder due to experiences of post resettlement trauma.

The study findings in research question 2 and hypotheses 2 indicated that psychological trauma relates significantly with mental health outcomes of internally displaced persons in Bayelsa State. This shows that psychological trauma impacts on their ability to think, learn or manage stress.

Conclusion

Emotional and psychological trauma can cause disruptions in a person's ability to manage stress conditions, leading to PTSD and depression as well as exacerbating existing mental health issues this study however, concludes that a significant relationship

exists between emotional trauma and mental health symptoms and similarly psychological trauma relates significantly with mental health outcomes. This shows that internally displaced persons who experience emotional and psychological trauma are at risk of developing mental health issues.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following commendations were made:

1. Internally displaced persons should be provided with health and social-services that will enhance their living standard.
2. Appropriate government agencies should periodically monitor and supervise the health status of internally displaced persons.
3. Efforts should be made by Bayelsa State government to provide a suitable and comfortable IDP camps for those who are displaced in their towns.

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