

Problems of Learners in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Camps Schools in Borno State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper investigated problems of learners in IDP Camps Schools as expressed by Teachers teaching in IDP Schools in Borno State, Nigeria. The study was a qualitative research that used focus group discussion. 27 Head Teachers and Teachers participated in the discussion and responded to Unstructured Interview for the research. Proforma was also used to collect information on learners' problems that were recorded in schools. The study identified Education, Health, Personal and Social problems hindering learners to attend, stay and complete school in IDP Camps Schools in Borno State. It was concluded that if these problems are not mitigated, learners cannot benefit from the school they are attending and the aim of providing education to the displaced children will not be achieved. It was recommended that Head Teachers of IDP Camps Schools should establish Parents' Teachers' Association (PTA) and School Based Management Committees (SBMCs) to assist in intervention towards reducing the learners' problems in schools.

Keywords: Internally, Displaced, Persons, IDPs, IDP Camp, Problems, Learners

Introduction

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are Nigerian citizens that were devastated by the calamity of Boko Haram insurgency and were forced to leave their homes, villages and towns to be settled in camps such as government buildings like schools, clinics and uncompleted estates (Amuda, Bokko & Katsala, 2017). Some IDPs are hosted in tents and shades erected for the purpose of accommodating the displaced persons in the host communities. As a result of the attack by the Boko Haram insurgents, there were displacement, missing and loss or separations of school age children from their parents, guardians and relatives. These resulted to identifying three main categories of learners in schools in camps.

During the research activity, the researcher identified three categories of learners in the Camps Schools. These are accompanied learners, unaccompanied learners and the street learners. The Accompanied Learners are those children that escaped from the disaster areas along with their parents, guardians, relatives or could be identified by an elderly person in the camp. Unaccompanied Learners are those children that escaped

from the disaster areas and found themselves in a particular camp, but nobody in the camp could identify them, but such children can tell about themselves and where they came from. The Street Learners are those children that were roaming the street in towns and cities before the emergence of the disaster and found that camp is safer and more comfortable than sleeping under the bridge, garages and market places as usual. Kaura and Abubakar (2014) investigated problems that could cause counselling needs among students of college of education. They emphasized that illness, mental health and separation from parents causes frustration and thus need counselling among the victims.

Learners in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Camps Schools cut across Basic Education Level (Primary and Junior Secondary Education). The United Nations Declaration on Child Right (UNICEF, 2016) affirmed that, education is the fundamental right of the child; under no circumstances shall the child's education be suspended. Therefore, both the Primary and Junior Secondary school age children in camps are provided with education. These categories of learners have various degrees of problems and demands that hinder them to attend, stay and complete school for their future development.

Winthrop and Ferris (2010) assessed school conditions of the children of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons affected by conflict. The research was supported by UNESCO in the crises areas in Africa and beyond. The researchers identified problems hindering the successful attendance and completion of school by the children of the refugees which include Language barrier, learning resources, children not in school before, bullying, physical and emotional assaults and school environment. United Nation High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR, 2016) identified five challenges to accessing quality education for Syrian Refugees Children. The challenges include language of communication, school environment, grown up children placed in lower classes, bullying and transportation. International Rescue Committee (IRC, 2017) in its research on the impact of war on Syrian children learning identified that learners are at risk of dropping out of school due to stigmatization, poor infrastructural facilities and human resource (inadequate trained teachers). While, in Australia, parents investigated school problems among children ages 9-15years. They admit that problems are bound to be faced by learners in schools; however, they identified poor performance, lack of motivation, loss of interest in school and poor relationship with students and teachers in school. The group maintained that school problems came in different forms and degrees. They advised parents to attend to child's school problems as they come (Australian Parents, 2018).

Centre for Women's Leadership (2018) conducted research on barriers to quality education in refugees and Internally Displaced Persons' Camps in New Jersey. The

research revealed problems like gender-based violence, exploitation, sexual harassment and assaults, and lack of safe place for female students; food, water and health issues. Wanjiru (2018) investigated internally displaced children's perception of their learning development in post conflict schooling in Kenya. The study revealed over-age learners, abandonment, access and acceptance to school, social and emotional development, peer-keeping and fostering community consciousness as the problems hindering children's learning. Grinvald (2010) investigated problems of integration of refugees and internally displaced persons in Serbia. The research revealed that, among other things that interrupt access to school for the children of refugees and displaced are lack of freedom to move out of the refugee place, financial support, Language, discrimination and shelter. The study in addition identified that children that flee problem areas have an average of 17 years. The study concludes that education gives the displaced learners opportunity to palliate psychological and social impacts of conflict and provides the learners with sense of stability and hope.

Akuto (2017) studied challenges of IDPs and its implications for counselling and the roles of key stakeholders in Makurdi, Nigeria. The study revealed that children of the displaced persons face educational challenges due to floating of parents along with their wards and schools have been occupied by the displaced persons as residential areas. French and Mooney (2016) investigated barriers and bridges towards access to education for internally displaced children. The study revealed infrastructure, safety, loss of documents, language, discrimination, school fees and learning materials as educational problems of the learners.

Learners in IDP Camps Schools are children that escaped from the disaster areas either with their parents or alone. Children that escaped from disaster areas do exhibit trauma and frustration (UNICEF, 2015). They feel unsafe, guilty, withdrawn and much other unwanted behaviours in camps schools. UNICEF through its educational interventions had trained teachers in Psychosocial Support (PSS) and Teaching Pedagogy to manage the frustrated and traumatized learners in post insurgency communities' schools so that the learners will be healed. Teachers from these schools continue to lament on challenges they encounter with students. These therefore lead to the conduct of this research to identify problems that may hinder learners in the IDP Camps Schools from attending, staying and completing school successfully.

Objectives

The objective of the study was to identify problems that hinder learners in the IDP Camps Schools from attending, staying and completing school successfully.

Methodology

The study is a Qualitative Research that used Focused Group Discussion. The researcher identified Head Teachers and Classroom Teachers for discussion and interview for data collection on problems of learners in IDP Camps Schools. The population for the study was all the teachers of 25 IDP Camps Schools in Maiduguri. The sample for the study was 27 IDP schools teachers. The sample comprised of 15 male and 12 female teachers; out of which seven were Head Teachers and 20 were Classroom Teachers, and 10 of the Teachers were living in camps while 17 of them were living in the host community and attending IDP Camps Schools daily for their lessons. The sampling technique used was Stratified Random Sampling. The instruments for data collection were Unstructured Interview Schedule and a Proforma. Unstructured interview was administered to respondents and same questions were asked across the categories of teachers to find out the difficulties (problems exhibited by learners) they are facing with the students in school classes, school compound and on school play grounds. Unstructured interview was to give the respondents freedom to express the learners' problems without restrictions (Dzakiria, 2006). Proforma was also used to collate the disciplinary problems recorded against the students in the respective target schools in the IDP Camps. The researcher is one of the UNICEF Master Trainer on Psychosocial Support in classroom and Teaching Pedagogy, and do visit all the IDP Camps Schools for in-classroom coaching. As a result, the researcher is aware of the learners' problems and collected the data as firsthand information (Kothari & Garg, 2014).

Presentation of results

Data collected through interview and proforma were analyzed through narration, content analysis and categorization for easy discussion. Teachers in the IDP Camps Schools in Maiduguri expressed that learners in their schools have problems that hinder them to be admitted, to stay and complete school. The problems were categorized into four major areas: Educational, Health, Personal and Social problems. The three categories of learners identified on the camps schools have some problems in common like the health and the social problems. There are some degrees of differences in personal and educational problems among the categories of the learners. Commonality among the categories of the learners in health and social problems is because all the learners escaped from the danger areas caused by Boko Haram insurgency. They have left their parents, guardians and relatives behind, separated or dead. Leaving their homes, villages, schools, learning materials and other valuable things behind which have been looted or burnt down by fire may cause personal and social problems among the learners.

The educational problems of learners on camps schools as expressed by the respondents were loss of hope due to indoctrination by the insurgents. **Extract from**

the response: *some students have lost hope in school due to indoctrination by the insurgents that 'western education is forbidden. That there is no need to attend western education schools and the insurgents will continue attacking western education schools. Other problems faced by teachers with the learners in camps schools were posed by the over aged learners, those learners that had never been to school before and those learners that were separated from their parents. **Extract from the response:***

The grown-up children that had never been to school before ...learners that had withdrawn themselves from their former school due to the insurgency and or parental socio-economic status. The street children that were there in the state for other reasons before the insurgency are now in the same classes with those that were in school before the insurgence invade their villages pose major problems to us in schools here. The streets and over-aged learners are not performing well in the class and as a result, they turn to bullying the young once that are performing well in the classes and on the playing ground.

The second problem of the learners in camps schools as expressed by IDPs school teachers are the issues of health and general hygiene. The unaccompanied and street children on camps find it difficult to access sanitary facilities, especially the girls. The camps are over crowded and sanitary facilities are scarce. **Extract from the response:** *Amenities like water, toilet facilities, sanitary facilities like soap and antiseptic cannot be obtained by unaccompanied and street children. They came to class without taking their morning bath, the girls do not plait their hair and the boys do not cut their hair. School wears are not washed; there are frequent absenteeism from classes due to rampant illness and sickness of different forms and degrees.*

Some personal problems of the learners are separation from their parents, guardians and relatives. Some of them do not get enough food, school uniform and other learning materials and adequate attention for other parental care. As a result most learners, more especially the unaccompanied and the street children are demanding to be returned back to their parents. **Extract from the response:** *Some street children were in Maiduguri for Quranic education and run away from their Quranic teachers, now they want to go back to their former teachers or their parents. The grown up learners are bullying the younger learners and this creates the feeling of insecurity in camps among the young and unaccompanied learners.*

Socially, the learners find it difficult to mingle with other children from other areas other than their own locality in camps. They exhibit withdrawal and shy away from crowd, feel to stay alone and reserved. **Extract from the response:** *Students are sometimes found quarreling and fighting among themselves on non-essential issues in*

the class, school compound and on playing ground. The school records showed high cases of fighting, bullying, stealing and truancy among all the categories of learners and across the class levels. They fight with objects like iron, broken woods, stones and bottles. The researcher observed that after school, children in camps do divide themselves into two groups; one group will be chasing the other. When asked the teachers, they said, the game was the simulation of insurgents attack on communities. **Extract from the response:** *one group is the attackers while the other group is the villagers with their volunteer vigilantes being assisted by the Nigerian army who would run away on the attack of the insurgents.*

The girls that are unaccompanied feel more disturbed than the boys; they are bullied more than the boys and feel unsafe in camps. **Extract from the response:** *They cannot plait their hair, cannot wash regularly and are not well fed. Some boys, more especially the unaccompanied and street learners do go out of camp to get other things they lack through begging.* The female learners cannot go out because of the fear of being raped and abducted as they are always advised by the camp managers and NGOs working in camps.

Discussion of findings

Learners in institutions of learning normally exhibit mild problems that create moderate anxiety from the challenges of learning environment. Problems exhibited by IDP learners in Camps Schools are severe that affects their admission, stay and completion of school, thus their academic performance. This study investigated problems of learners in IDP Camps Schools in Maiduguri, the center of Boko Haram insurgency. Interactions with the Head Teachers and Classroom Teachers revealed four main problems areas hindering learners education in camps schools. These are Education, Health, Personal and Social problems.

The educational problems affecting learners in camps schools include learners that were rescued by the Nigeria Army from areas controlled by the insurgents and have been indoctrinated by the insurgents that Western Education is forbidden and they feel discouraged and scared to attend schools in camps. There is also the over-aged learners, more especially the street learners, who had not been in school before and those that have left school for a long time as a result of the insurgency were now over aged for Basic Education Level. When placed in the same class with their juniors, they feel stigmatized and as well bully the young boys and girls. This agrees with Winthrop and Ferris (2010), UNHCR (2016) and Wanjiru (2018) that refugee and IDP children are bullied in schools in camps. More especially the female learners feel unsafe as the result of bullying by grown up children.

As of the result of trauma, frustration and depression due to effects of insurgency, learners in camps schools lack interest in school and have no positive thinking for future. The trauma and frustration could be due to the loss and separation from parents and relatives where most of the learners want returning back home. This agrees with Kaura and Abubakar (2014) who found that separation from parents causes problem among school age children. The learners are mentally sick due to the shock of fleeing away from the danger areas and sounds of heavy military machineries, bombs and guns. Inadequate and sufficient food in camps also contributes to boys going out of camps to beg and this could be the cause of personal problems in the learners. Frequent fighting among the learners caused some learners to feel unsafe in camps, more especially girls. These also have created ill social interaction among the learners as they cannot freely mingle and interact with people in the camps and even with their school mates as a result of feeling scared. This agrees with French and Mooney (2016) and the Centre for Women's Leadership (2018) that exploitation, harassments and assaults, both physically and emotionally, are barriers to quality education in camps to IDP learners and that IDP children feel unsafe in camps. The unaccompanied girls that cannot plait their hair, no regular bathing and parental care make them exhibit poor health and hygienic habits and may result to unwanted behaviour that might affect their adult health and personality as mothers to be.

Conclusion

Learners in IDP Camps Schools have problems that hinder them from attending, staying and completing school. There are four thematic problems facing children in IDP Camps Schools in Maiduguri. They include Education, Health, Personal and Social problems. If these problems are not mitigated, learners cannot benefit from the school they are attending and the aim of providing education to the displaced children as supported by UNICEF will not be achieved. The UN declaration that education is the right of the child is also defeated. These problems are essential demands that support human development; without satisfying them, learners will continue to have problems in camps schools.

Recommendations

Based on the result of this study, it was recommended that:

1. To address the educational problems of the learners, Head Teachers in IDP Camps Schools should establish Parents' Teachers' Association (PTA) and School Based Management Committee (SBMC) in their schools.
2. The PTA and SBMCs established should report to State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) for the extension of school feeding system to the Camps Schools to serve those learners that do not get enough and adequate food.

3. Headteachers with the support of PTA, SBMCs and NGOs should create bathing space in schools for students coming to school without taking bath.

4. Headteachers supported by the NGOs should establish school First Aid Box in their schools to assist ill learners and to ensure adequate supply of sanitary facilities to girls.

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