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COGNITIVE READINESS FOR COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION AMONG DEPRESSED INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN JOS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Depression has often been associated with impairment in cognitive functioning. This study aims to investigate predictors of depression and cognitive readiness for community reintegration among Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Jos, following the persistent conflicts between nomadic Fulani herdsmen and Berom indigenous farmers in Jos, north central Nigeria. This is a cross-sectional study conducted with 248 adult IDPs selected through a systematic random sampling at Geo-Sciences IDP camp. Beck's Depression Inventory-II scale (BDI-II) a 21 item self-rated scale was utilized to assess key symptoms of depression. We also used a self-developed questionnaire to assess cognitive readiness for community reintegration. The results revealed that depression is associated with cognitive readiness for community reintegration (β -.659,R^2=.434, P = 0.00R^2). The study also showed that IDPs suffered from both physical and cognitive symptoms of depression which affected their cognitive readiness to reintegrate into their communities. The result further points to the fact that depressed IDPs are liable to experience both physical and cognitive symptoms such as fatigue, feeling of worthlessness, hopelessness, reduced energy, difficulty in concentration and making decisions to reintegrate into their communities because of the perceived fear of renewed attacks from the herdsmen. It is recommended that the Federal Ministry of Health as part of its medical services routine provide regular psychiatric services to IDPs. Furthermore, Nigerian government at all levels and stakeholders should take concrete steps in resolving the re-occurring herdsmen-farmers' conflicts there by demarcating grazing land for the herdsmen in Nigeria to forestall further escalation of the conflicts.

Keywords: Berom, Depression, Fulani herdsmen, Internally Displaced Persons, Social Readiness, Community, Reintegration.

Introduction

Depression, a common and serious mood disorder has been associated with impairment in cognitive functioning DSM-V, APA, 2013). Being a depressive disorder, it is also associated with constant feeling of grief and despair and loss of interest in activities once enjoyed by the sufferer. In addition to the emotional problems caused by depression, the sufferer can also manifest physical symptoms such as chronic pain or digestive issues (DSM-V, APA, 2013). According to the DSM-5, for an individual to meet a criterion for a diagnosis of depression, the individual must be experiencing 5 or more symptoms during the same 2-week period and at least one of the symptoms should be either person diagnosed as having depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure in all, or almost all activities most of the day; diminished interest in all or almost all activities of the day; significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain, or decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day; slowing down of thought and a reduction of physical movement; fatigue or loss of energy every day; feeling of worthlessness or excessive guilt nearly every day, diminished ability to think, concentrate, or make decisions nearly every day, recurrent thought of death, suicidal ideation without any specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide (APA, 2013).

Renowned scholars such as Hammar and Årdal (2009) have associated depression with considerable impairment in cognitive functioning.In the context of this paper, cognitive functioning relates to how internally displaced persons (IDPs) are willing or unwilling to return to their communities and engage and participate in both social, domestic activities and the ability to fulfill their occupational roles even if normalcy returns to such communities because of the fear of renewed attacks from the insurgents.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, a bulk of most of the research work conducted with IDPs have largely focused on issues related to the causes, effects, internal intervention, and provision of humanitarian aids such as food, clothes and temporary shelter to the IDPs (Okon, 2018), while issues associated with IDPs their mental health and specially cognitive readiness for reintegration have often been overlooked during the reintegration process. Owing to this knowledge gap, this study was conducted with IDPs (victims of herdsmen-farmers' conflicts) in Jos, north central Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, we give prominence to Aaron Beck's cognitive theory of depression to explain how depression could predict cognitive willingness or otherwise of IDPs who have been attacked and displaced from their habitat homes and now living in camps or in host communities to return to their original homes. The theory focuses more on people's beliefs rather than their behavior. According to Beck (1967), when vulnerable individuals such as the IDPs experience stressful life events, they tend to think negatively hence, they are liable to develop depression. In essence, depression results from systematic negative bias in thinking processes. The cognitive theorists of depression emphasize that individuals with specific maladaptive pattern of thinking are susceptible to depression unlike the biological theorists who opine that depression is a result of changes in the hormones or low rates of reinforcement. Beck believes that negative thoughts are the essential issues to depression According to Beck, the negative automatic thoughts which most times emerge out of the blue, are caused by faulty beliefs are the basis of depression and not the other way round. Fundamentally, Beck's point

of view is that depression is mainly caused by an individual's view of his/herself rather than having a negative view of oneself due to depression which could be typical of vulnerable populations including IDPs who go through horrible experiences in the hands of the insurgents as they are displaced into camps.

The cognitive theory of depression is relevant to this study because while the IDPs were attacked and displaced from their habitats, they were exposed to all sorts of horrendous experiences including maiming, killing, abduction, torture, rape, of their loved ones, and engaging in gender-based violence (GBV) are liable to experience depressive episodes because they are liable to develop errors in their thinking pattern. In view of the fact that depression is a mood disorder, depressed IDPs are bound to feel, worthless, hopeless, inability to think, concentrate, or make decisions in particular relating to their decision to reintegrate into communities. Additionally, they may experience inability to feel pleasure, often detached from others, and most often having recurrent suicidal ideations or attempts since they believe that their future is bleak and the world is not safe for them (Beck, 1967) Amid these numerous depressive symptoms, it is reasonable to explain that depressed IDPs who manifest these symptoms a likely to have difficulties in returning to their communities and perform their domestic roles.

Review of Literature

Extant studies by scholars such as Hammar and Årdal (2009) have established the link between depression and impairment in cognitive functioning in depressed persons. Hammar and Ardal further stressed that depressed people often isolate themselves from others and tend to feel hopeless, worthless or experience inappropriate guilt. The scholars in their study also found that depression is associated with cognitive impairment particularly in the severe phase of depression. Interestingly, other scholars in the last decade have drawn our attention to the fact that depression is associated with disturbance in the cognitive areas of awareness, recall, and psychomotor speed(Austin et al., 2013;Castaneda et al.,2008). Depression has also been associated with disability and poor quality of life (Papakostas et al., 2004). Most of these symptoms are depicted in the work of Ibrahim et al. (2018)who examined the challenges of reintegration faced by returning depressed Yazidi women and girls who were abducted and traded into sexual slavery by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a terrorist organization.

In Sub-Saharan African countries such asUganda and Nigeria that have been overwhelmed by conflicts, the situation is worrisome asstudies conducted in northern Uganda have established the association between depression and cognitive readiness for reintegration. For example, Pham et al.(2009)in their study with former abducted children by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA),a rebel group in 8 northern Ugandan districts to determine the type of violence the abductees were exposed to and the extent to which the atrocious acts perpetrated affected their psychological well-being. Pham and colleagues found that the former abductees experienced difficulties in psychosocial adjustment, especially those who suffered from symptoms of PTSD and depression. The girls in particular who were used as sex slaves, suffered from gender-based violence including rape, sexual assault, loss of identity, integrity, low-self esteem because they were forced to marry the LRA commanders similar to the Boko Haram episode in north eastern Nigeria. Research with victims of herders-farmers clashes on depression and cognitive readiness is sparse. However, studies with victims of Boko Haram do suggest that depressed IDPs experience difficulties in reintegrating into their

communities because of the perceived fear of renewed attacks even when normalcy returns to communities affected by herders-farmers' conflicts. In view of this, we desire to test the hypothesis which stated that there is a significant positive relationship between depression and cognitive readiness for community reintegration among IDPs in Nigeria.

Method

Design

We conducted a cross-sectional quantitative survey study to access the relationship between depression and IDPs' cognitive readiness for reintegrating into their communities in Nigeria. The quantitative approach was adopted because we used a large number of IDPs with PTSD challenges as participants wherein data was obtained through questionnaires and further scrutinized using computer techniques. This quantitative approach was preferred against the qualitative approach because of its objectivity and accuracy, and generalization of results (Connolly, 2007).

Participants

Participants for this study were chosen from Geo-Sciences IDP Camp; consisting of86 males (34.7%) males and 162 females (65.3%) randomly chosen participated in the study. Their ages varied from 18 years and above. Participants within the age group of 28-37 years (26.2%) took part in the study. One hundred and fifty-two (152) participants representing (61.3%) were married while 44 (17.7%) of them were single. Widowed participants were 51(20.6%), with only 1 divorcee (0.4%) as at the time of the study. Majority of the participants, 100 (40.3%) fell into the category of those with secondary education, followed closely by participants with primary school education numbering 70 (28.2%). Twenty-nine (29) participants representing (11.7%) had diploma certificates. Participants with University degrees were 11 in number representing (4.4%) took part in the study, while 38 (15%) of the participants had adult education. In this study, IDPs were defined as indigenous Berom farmers taking refuge in Geo-Sciences IDP camp, Anguldi, Bukuru subsequent to their attack displacement by Fulani herdsmen in some communities of Barkin Ladi and some parts of Jos south Local government Areas (LGAs) of Plateau state, north central Nigeria.

Sampling Technique

We adopted a systematic random sampling technique using a sampling interval of 10 to select participants for this study. A list of all IDPs aged 18 years and above was extracted from a register kept in the custody of the camp commandant. The list which had a total of 3,500 persons in the camp based on records was obtained by an independent person. The first respondent was selected using simple random sampling. Nine (9) pieces of paper were labeled "X" and one labeled "Y". The labels on the papers were concealed and shuffled in an opaque box and the first 10 participants on the list were asked to pick one at a time in that order with replacement until the paper labeled "Y" was picked. Participant number two was the first to pick the "Y" labeled paper hence position two was selected as the starting point until the requisite sample size was arrived at.

Instruments

Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II)

Aaron Beck's Depression Inventory- II (BDI-II) scale was used to assess depressive symptoms. The instrument which is a 21 item self rated scale evaluates key symptoms of depression. The

scale is comprised of items such as mood, pessimism, and sense of failure, self dissatisfaction, guilt, punishment, self-dislike, self-accusation, suicidal ideas, weeping, irritability, social detachment, indecisiveness, body image change, work difficulty, sleeplessness, fatigability, loss of appetite, weight loss, somatic preoccupation, and loss of libido.

Scoring: The instrument is scored on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 3. A total score of 0-13 is signifies minimal range, a sore of 14-19 is mild depression; a score of 20-28 signifies moderate depression, while a score of 29-63 is considered as severe depression. In this study, participants who scored the above cut point of 19 were classified as having moderate to severe depression (Beck et al., 1961). The scale has a high internal consistency of (alpha greater than or equals to (0.84), and reliability test exceeding (0.75). Additionally, the instrument has superb psychometric properties and has been frequently used in research for identifying the existence of depression severity in agreement with the DSM-IV criterion(Beck et al., 1961). For the justification of this study, the Cronbach alpha of the instrument was gauged at (α = 0.93) demonstrating that the instrument was consistent and adequate for the study. Furthermore, the instrument has been effectively utilized by scholars in different cultural settings including scholars as Taru et al. (2018) in their studies with IDPs in Nigeria.

CognitiveReadiness for Community Reintegration

In this study, we assessed cognitive readiness using the authors' self developed scale through four steps:

1) The first step involved coming up with items projected to measure cognitive readiness for community re-integration. These items were developed based on the researcher's knowledge, as well as a through a review of literature, and the engagement of expert psychologists and key-informants with vast working experience with refugees and IDPs.
2) A total of 11 items were put together and categorized into the constructs of cognitive readiness.
3) Ten (10) subject-matter experts were recruitment and requested to rate each item on its relevance to measuring cognitive readiness for community re-integration.
4) The Cicchetti and Sparrow (1981) Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) intervals was used to establish inter-rater reliability.

Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) based on the 11formulated items to measure cognitive readiness by a group of 10 psychologists, and its 95% confidence intervals were calculated using SPSS statistical package version 25 (SPSS Inc, Chicago, IL). The results revealed a Cronbach Alpha (α) of cognitive readiness (11 items; α = .837) which is within an acceptable range(Cicchetti& Sparrow, 1981). Thus, there was a relatively high inter-rater reliability for the 11 items of cognitive readiness scale. A pilot study to come up with the inter-item reliability of the scale for the study was conducted.

Procedure

Sequel to obtaining ethical approval from the Ethics committee of the Plateau State University, Bokkos, we proceeded to the IDP camp where we intimated the both the camp commandant and the Secretary on our mission (Data collection). Approval was subsequently granted for us to commence the exercise at a scheduled date. During the data collection stage, participants were cautiously debriefed; stressing out the need for their consent and their rights to

privacy/identity, withdrawal from the study at any time they so desire. Participants were also debriefed on the rationale of the study. Data collection At the end of data collection which took a period of 15 days with an average of 30 questionnaires daily, participants were assured that their privacy/identity will not be compromised because data collected will not be released to a third party.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the participants were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 22 (SPSS 22) software. Descriptive statistics were used in summarizing the data while inferential statistics were used to test for significant associations between variables. We also used frequencies, proportions and tables to summarize our data. Linear regression was used to test the study hypothesis.

Ethical consideration

We sought for and obtained ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the Research and Development department, Plateau State University Bokkos Plateau State, north central Nigeria (Review Number: PLASU/REC/000025/2018)in accord with the ethical standards as laid down in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki. In addition, the study methodology, the consent forms, and questionnaires were also approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Plateau State University, Bokkos before the commencement of the study. Furthermore, permission was also granted by the camp commandant of Geo-Science IDP camp to utilize the IDPs as well as the camp facilities for this study. All the study participants consented to partake in the study by giving their verbal and written informed consent. Adults aged 18 years and above and residents of the camp were eligible for inclusion in the study. Participants eligible for this study were those physically fit and free from any medical or surgical condition which could impair with their ability to partake in the study. Names of participants were not included in any of the study findings and no financial inducement was given to participants before their inclusion in the study.

Results

Linear regression was used to test the study hypothesis which stated that there is a significant positive relationship between depression and cognitive readiness for community reintegration among IDPs in Nigeria. The preference for linear regression is premised on the fact that regression analysis allows us to know the strength of relationship between variables. The result is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1:

Relationship between depression and cognitive readiness for community reintegration

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	*t*	R^2	*Sig.*	*Adj.*R^2
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
(Constant)	40.970	.706		5.996		.000	
Depression	-.346	.025	-.659	-13.74	.434	.000	.432

a. Dependent Variable: Cognitive Readiness for community reintegration.

Results in table 1 revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between depression and cognitive readiness for community reintegration among IDPs in Nigeria

(β *-.659,*R^2=.434, P = 0.00).The model summary has R^2=.434 significant at P=.00. This implies that in the overall model, depression accounted for 43% variation in cognitive readiness for community reintegration. It also implies that IDPs with depression have only 43% chances of cognitive readiness to reintegrate into their communities. The result therefore showed that with increasing depression, IDPs' cognitive readiness to reintegrate into their communities is low. We could consequently deduce that cognitive readiness for community reintegration is significantly lower with increase in depression among IDPs in Nigeria.

Discussion

We had initially hypothesisedthat depression will be significantly associated with cognitivewillingness for community reintegration among IDPs in Nigeria.In line with our expectation, the result showed that there is a significant positive relationship between depression and cogntive readiness for community reintegration among the study participants. The study outcome thus implies thatfollowing the persistent attacks on their communities, IDPs became depressed, disillusioned, felt worthless, and this has a debilitating effect on their cognitive functioning. The result is expected taking cognizance of the fact that while the IDPs were attacked and displaced from their communities, they were subjected to several atrocities including killings of their beloved ones, rape, physical torture, which could have resulted to feeling of worthlessness and hopelessness thus, having a negative view of themselves, the world, and the future. result corroborates the findings of Ibrahim et al. (2018) who documented that Yazidi women and girls who were abducted and traded into sexual slavery by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) a terrorist organization, faced high rates of stigmatization, social isolation, and rejection by their family as well as community members.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Our study akin to others has some strengths and limitations which have to be recognized. Foremost, the result of this study reveals that there is a significant positive relationship between depression and cognitive readiness for reintegration among IDPs. The study outcome provides a baseline data for scholars, mental health practitioners and policy makers who may embark on future research work with depressed IDPs. The result of this study is a landmark achievement as international communities and Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are kept abreast of the IDPs' reintegration processes in Nigeria particularly in terms of their cognitive willingness or otherwise to go back to their original homes.

However, in spite of the strengths of the study, there are limitations which negatively affected the study and need to be taken into account. First, the participants may have experienced some difficulties in understanding the study instrument assessing depression which may have resulted in limited information provided by the participants. Secondly, the questionnaire items are close ended hence; the participants could have been denied the opportunity to fully express their experiences, perceptions, and beliefs which change over time. Furthermore, the majority of the available literature on IDPs reintegration is full up studies on physical reintegration with little or no stress on mental reintegration. Finally, data for this study was obtained from a sample size exclusively of the Berom ethnic group in Plateau State North central Nigeria without involving other ethnic groups thus; there need to carry out similar

study with a larger sample size is justifiable to provide internal validity of the results. The limitations of this study could be harnessed as a rich avenue for future research in similar area. The implication of the study result is that owing to persistent herdsmen-farmers' conflicts, survivors were diagnosed with depression consequently; they are liable to experience impairment in cognitive functioning such as thinking, concentrating, and the ability to make decisions concerning their willingness to reintegrate into their communities. The implication of the result also means that if sufficient attention is not given to depressed IDPs, there is the propensity that ineffective treatment approach will be carried out on the vulnerable victims thus; this may further aggravate their predicaments thus exposing them to more adversities.

Conclusion

In this study, we found that subsequent to the recurring clashes between Fulani herdsmen and the Berom indigenous farmers, several victims of the clashes in particular the Berom farmers were displaced into IDP camps. Furthermore, most of the Berom farmers who constituted the study participants developed depression in the course of their displacement. It is apparent that their cognitive functioning was enormously impaired hence; affecting their willingness to reintegrate into their communities because of the perceived fear of renewed attacks by the herdsmen. Consequently, we recommend that government at all levels as well as stakeholders in Nigeria adopt adequate measures in resolving the reoccurring conflicts between the herdsmen and local farmers by demarcating grazing land for the herdsmen to embark on their grazing activities without further provocations. We also recommended that regular psychiatric services should be provided for IDPs as part of routine medical services. Also, traditional and religious leaders should also be involved by ensuring that they come up with strategies in resolving the persistent herdsmen-farmers' clashes which have remained unabated and have attracted the attention of stakeholders and the international community. Finally, we advocate that future studies in related field should be conducted with survivors of banditry, cattle rustling, and kidnapping activities being witnessed in most parts of Nigeria using larger samples sizes.

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