The Nigerian Educational Psychologists Vol. 21 No. 1, August, 2024. pp. 65-75

CHANGING FAMILY VALUES AND INSECURITY IN BENUE STATE: IMPLICATION FOR PEOPLE LIVING IN THE IDP CAMPS

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Abstract

The security situation as a result of the herder-farmer clashes over land for sustenance has generated a lot of insecurity in some states in Nigeria and Benue state in particular. The displacement of people from their homes and resettlement of same people in internally displaced people's camps in uncompleted buildings, school premises, and makeshift buildings have left much to be desired for family values. This study was guided by three objectives and one hypothesis. The research design was a survey research design. The population of the study was One thousand five hundred and sixty-eight (1,568) displaced people in 3 camps in Makurdi metropolis and its environs. The sample size consists of 100 intact families who stay in family clusters or households in the camp. Data was collected through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in a structured framework. The data was coded and analyzed using percentages and means (x) for all the research questions. Results of the study showed 10 identified family values varying with the mean scores of between 2.98 – 2.50 for the highest and lowest respectively. All 15 items on research question one agrees on the family as a responsible productive and reproductive unit, the family functions as a united, cooperating unit, enhancing family business, family members being hardworking and have effective communication, the family values respect for the elderly, family leadership and other authorities. Result on research question two presents 10 items on value changes experienced by families in the camp to include reduced family cohesion and companionship such as lack of family time for togetherness, commitment and support for each other, loss of family values including discipline, children keeping late nights, alcoholism and anti-family vices(womanizing). Results on research question three on the coping strategies used by families to cope with camp life shows 8 items with a mean range of 2.80- 2.50, all items agree on the coping strategies to include daily scavenging, begging for food, involvement in menial jobs, intervention from government and other philanthropic organizations, cutting down of all cost of living and only emphasis on feeding, engaging in spiritual activities. It was concluded that the displacement of families as a result of the herder-farmer clashes has generated a lot of challenges in Benue state and these challenges have affected the cherished family value system and the society is threatened by this breakdown in the family values. Based on the findings, it was recommended that value education should be introduced as part of the programs in the IDP camps, resettlement plans for displaced people should be a major priority by government, the family still remains the first agent for value inculcation.

Keywords: Family Values, Trado-Cultural Norms, Inter-Communal Violence, Displaced Persons, Family cohesion, Child abandonment

Introduction

Values are important in the existence of man especially within the family setting. In African traditions and indeed in most part of the world especially in Nigeria, family values are distinguishing factors that describe a family for greatness or failure. Values are described as beliefs, priorities and critical measures that are important in the way of life of a people and determine family and work life. Kembe (2022) identified some family values to include values for integrity, happy family relationship and companionship, respectable family life and honesty and practicing safety and protective measures as well as reproduction and productivity. According to Ikediashi and Akande (2015) values are fundamental beliefs that motivate one's actions and attitudes. Family values are traditional or cultural values that pertain to the structure, function, roles, beliefs, attitudes, and ideals of the family (Seth, 2015). The concept of family values may also refer to the extent to which familial relationships are valued within people's lives. Therefore, family values help to propel one to goals in life, and as such one would be able to evaluate areas of strength and weakness to improve on at any time. In the absence of family value system or no values at all, there are bound to be chaos and the society can degenerate to a situation of no control and failure in positive behavioral outcomes.

Values are enshrined as part of the socialization process where family members are taught norms, beliefs and values that guide everyday life. Upon entering adulthood, individuals identify personal values that will serve as motivation and benchmark for success. Family is an important social institution that works as the platform which the individual's normal or disturbed social development takes place (Morggado & Vale Dias, 2013). Children have their first relationship experiences from the family, learn and rehearse social relations and receive reinforcement and/or punishment according to the dictates of the society. The reinforcement and/or punishments allow children to identify a set of behaviors that are acceptable and /or avoided (Sequeira de Figueiredo & Dias, 2012). Family environment involves the social environment within families in which all social, reproductive and economic functions take place, (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2013). Therefore, the family environment exerts an overwhelming influence on lives of people within the internally displaced peoples' camps (IDP), as well as families in normal setting.

Decline in family values have been manifested in so many anti-social behaviors such as drug addiction, alcoholism, out of school and school dropout and high concern about teenage prostitution including the deterioration in the family belief system. The decline in human values and relationships is a growing concern in today's rapidly changing world. Family, which is the first school of a person's life, used to

be a source of happiness and support for people in the past. Recently, children are raised with limited knowledge about family values, responsibility and relationships as a result of the long stay in the IDP camps. In Benue state for example the long stay in the IDP camps has spun over 10 years which means some children are born and are being raised in the IDP camps without any hope for the future.

Inter-communal violence, caused by competition between local farming communities and nomadic herdsmen has plagued Nigeria's Middle Belt states (Benue, Southern Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, and Taraba) into an escalating situation of people living in internally displaced People's (IDP) camps. Clashes between these two economic groups have continued to leave a bloody trail, with its attendant destruction of properties, farmlands, shelter and a source of livelihoods. On the average, 5.2 million people have been displaced annually in the past 13 years due to insurgency, political instability and terrorist activities, the global estimate of IDPs due to conflict was estimated as 40.8 million (GRID, 2020). The concern for the plight of children during such situations of conflict, war and destruction is a major concern of this study.

Nigeria, like other countries of the world, consider safety of lives and properties of her citizenry most important than any other human need. This is simply because security is one of the necessary conditions for the growth and development of any nation. Security is also very critical for the survival of the Nigerian people and nation at large. The Sustainable Development Goal states the importance of peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16) as critical to the personal, family and national sustainability. In the absence of peace and family harmony, goals cannot be achieved, and this will affect individual and family goal achievement. People living in the IDP camps seem to be confronted with a lot of challenges that affects cherished family values which impinge on the cohesion and stability of the family. Where unmet needs for basic shelter, feeding and health are threatened, the instinct of survival comes to bear on individuals and family life. It is therefore not surprising that the youths both male and female are mostly affected by a breakdown of family values. For the young girls, it is a good excuse to succumb to the ploy of early prostitution and for the boys is an excuse to engage in crime, (Kembe, 2024).

Taiwo et al (2016) opined that traumatic stress in childhood can be caused by poor or inadequate relationship with a primary caretaker which forms a major concern as the present terrorism events in Benue state posit situations of psychological stress and a threat to mental health. Separation anxiety from the primary caregiver makes children to suffer deprivation of adequate family relationship and sustainability. Children from the ages of 5 to 14 are still in their physical, cognitive, emotional and

social development where conducive atmosphere and environment will contribute to the level of growth and development in all aspects.

Several reports from people in the IDP camps (UNCHR, 2016, FJDP, 2023) have indicated that IDPs are at the mercy of people for their daily livelihoods, even the material support that is given by government and other philanthropic organizations are sometimes compromised by the camp officers. There is also no regularity of material and financial support, thus campers are not sure of daily, weekly or monthly supplies. In the absence of meeting the basic needs of individuals and the family, there are bound to be loss of cherished values. The National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons (FGN, 2021) further states that all possible measures must be taken in order that displaced persons receive satisfactory conditions of shelter, hygiene, health, safety and nutrition; and those members of the same family are not separated. In addition, displaced persons have a right to return home voluntarily in safety as soon as the reasons for their displacement cease to exist, (FGN, 2021).

From personal observations and interactions with people living in the IDP camps, there are numerous woes from both men and women as changes has occurred pertaining to the values of the family. These changes are sometimes peculiar to male and female differently, for example, while the husband (male) complain of their wives and children not respecting their authority and spending more time outside of the home, the female (wives) have complained of men going physical, being abusive and engaging in 'bad' behavior such as keeping late nights, not living up to their responsibility and desertion. Children have suffered abandonment and neglect with some losing their parents and some parents are helpless as to what to do with the situation confronting families in the IDP camps. This makes this study significant as it determines family values and the changes it has undergone among people living in the IDP camps in Benue state.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to determine the changing family values and insecurity in Benue State: Implication for people living in the IDP camps. Specifically, the study:

1. Identify important family values among the people of Benue state
2. Identify major changes that family values have undergone as a result of living in the IDP camps of Benue state
3. Establish the coping Strategies that have been engaged in by families faced with the challenges of living in the IDP camps in Benue State.

Methodology

Research Design

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study as it shows the situation of the people living in the IDP. The descriptive survey design is suitable for the study because it explains the reality on the ground showing the effect of conflicts among people in the IDP camps. The IDP camps situated in Makurdi was used but there are other IDP camps in Agatu, Katsina-ala, Buruku, Logo, Gwer West and East Local government areas. Therefore, results of the survey research design can be used to generalize to a wider population including these other locations in Benue state and other areas affected by widespread conflict.

Area of the Study

The study will be carried out in specific IDP camps namely Agan and Ichwa camps in Makurdi local government area of Benue state. This study area was chosen because of the incessant attack and crisis of the herders' attack in some parts of Benue state and the migration of people to safety places such as schools (Ichwa) and make makeshift settlement areas built by the state government and other non-governmental organizations. Makurdi is the headquarters of Benue state and the seat of government. It is generally believed that government protection and safety for the people will reach the IDP faster if all move to Makurdi metropolis

Population of the Study

The population of the study includes 2,300 people from the Agan camp and 1,760 from Ichwa camp. There are 1078 households comprising of intact households of husband, wife and their children in these camps. These figures are not constant as the displaced people are highly mobile and are on constant move to find better places or are taken over by relations living around.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample consists of three hundred and ninety-six (396) people who responded to the instrument. The simple random and stratified sampling techniques were used to identify the field of eligible people who participated in the study. The respondents were stratified according to marital and family status, therefore only married people who are in intact families or have had their families at some point living together formed the respondents. The study eliminated single people who have been displaced, therefore such did not participate in this study.

Instrument for Data Collection

The Internal Displaced Persons Questionnaire (IDPQ) was used for data collection. This was developed according to the objectives of the study after an extensive

literature review. The instrument composed of a 4-point scale of preference of 4,3,2, and 1 for strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree and Disagree respectively.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data was collected after filling the consent form by all the respondents through the camp coordinators and each head of a household. Data was collated and analyzed through the use of quantitative analysis of mean score for all research questions and linear regression analysis was used to analyze the only null hypothesis.

Results and Discussions

Result of the study is presented on table 1-4

Table 1: Mean Response of Important Family Values Among the People of Benue State

S/N	Family Values	X	Decision
1	Responsible living as a unit of production and reproduction	2.78	Acceptable
2	Unit of unity, cooperation, integrity, honesty and love	2.88	Acceptable
3	Economic partnership through family farming business	2.89	Acceptable
4	Hard work and commitment	2.90	Acceptable
5	Enhancing Family self esteem	2.68	Acceptable
6	Effective family communication	2.55	Acceptable
7	Shared family occupations and recreation	2.55	Acceptable
8	Shared leisure time, folklores and story time	2.76	Acceptable
9	Respect for elders, family leadership and other constituted authority	2.90	Acceptable
10	Support and care for the elderly	2.98	Acceptable
11	Respect for the culture of the people and family values	2.88	Acceptable
12	Value for constituted authority in the community	2.73	Acceptable
13	Values of exemplary discipline of family members	2.50	Acceptable
14	Family cohesion and companionship	2.58	Acceptable
15	Family security	2.65	Acceptable

Table 1 shows 15 items of values that are peculiar to people of Benue State especially those in the IDP camps. All the 15 items are above 2.50 which means the respondents agree with all the items as the important values of families in Benue state.

Table 2: Changing Family Values as a Result of Living in the IDP Camps of Benue State

S/N	Items	Mean score	Decision
1	Loss of the Unit of production and reproduction (more of female headed families, loss of source of livelihood, subsistence living)	2.58	Agree
2	Poor family communication (high cost of displacement leading to family division, loss of family communication, separation, desertion, divorce)	2.70	Agree
3	Displaced people suffer from losses, compromised levels of family values, idleness and helplessness.	2.7	Agree
4	Family Integrity and self-esteem has been compromised (lack of privacy, families arranged in clusters or unrelated households, loss of personal and family integrity)	2.50	Agree
5	Lack of shared family occupations and recreation (incidence of anxiety, depression, lack of space for recreation, no joint family or shared family occupations	2.56	Agree
6	Reduced leisure time, folklores, story time (loss of shared family time, loss of shared mealtime, loss of family leisure)	2.73	Agree
7	Lack of care for the elderly (loss of support for the elderly, respect for the elderly)	2.58	Agree
8	Loss of family values (exemplary discipline of family, keeping late nights, anti-family vices-womanizing, smoking, use of drugs, alcoholism)	2.99	Agree
9	Reduced family Cohesion and Companionship (lack of family togetherness, commitment and support)	2.54	Agree
10	Inadequate family Security (protection, safety, devoid of family crisis)	2.40	Agree

Table 2 shows the result of changes that family values have undergone. 10 items were presented with all 10 items indicating changes that have occurred in the family values recording a mean above 2.50.

Table 3: Coping Strategies that have been engaged in by Families Living in the IDP Camps in Benue State

S/N	Items	Mean score	Decision
1	Surviving from daily scavenging around the area	2.78	Acceptable
2	Begging to survive from the people around and other passerby.	2.80	Acceptable
3	Involved in menial jobs-cleaning, fetching water, sanitation,	2.50	Acceptable
4	Government interventions once in a while	2.50	Acceptable
5	Interventions from philanthropic organizations and faith-based interventions on education, food supplies and	2.80	Acceptable

	medical outreach		
6	Family support from non- affected members.	2.50	Acceptable
7	Total cut down on material and financial costs on any item/activity in the household	2.50	Acceptable
8	Engaging in spiritual and social activities	2.75	Acceptable

Table 3 shows the coping strategies of families living in the IDP camps with all the 8 items acceptable as the coping strategies adopted by the IDPs

Discussion

The increase in internally displaced persons is now becoming a global problem and Benue state is not an exception. The establishment of camps for such people calls for even a greater concern. Displacement has resulted because of wars, famine, natural disasters such as massive construction work and flooding. In this study, displacement is traced to the herder/ farmer clashes over land for grazing of cattle. Displacement has continued to abate family cohesion and values in Benue state, this justifies the need for this study. Table one shows the values that have guided the family for years which have been described as trado-cultural values. These values are manifested on table one as responsible living, respect for family cohesion, economic production, shared leisure, hard work, integrity, respect and support for elders. Imasuen (2015) compared family values then and now in a focus group discussion with 40 participants in Enugu state and revealed that family values are gradually being replaced with family vices with children growing up in a society that is technologically driven and children learning at a faster pace. The study of Onwugbene (2017) differs with this study in the area of research design used and the result outcomes, where in the previous study, the changing values emphasis is on the use of technology and the changing roles of parents, while in this study the traditional and cultural roles are still being emphasized.

The use of social media has kept parents lagging behind in transmitting moral values and helping children understand the importance of family values. Kembe (2022) states that most often, social media is the preferred medium of learning society's values at the detriment of family values. What children see being exhibited in the public space through the social media and physically by observation does not promote family values. The use of alcohol as a social way of entertainment, the free use of illicit drugs bought freely over the counter and also freely sold in motor parks and marketplaces does not in any way show the right values. Children who are high on these habits will have deficit in behavioral outcomes and learning.

Furthermore (Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman 2013, Olanrenwaju, et al.,2018, Kembe, 2022) mentioned the pressure being faced by parents now as a major changing value, where parents have passed the responsibility of raising children to the society.

Parent roles and responsibilities have been eroded as a result of the socio-economic challenges being faced by households especially those in the IDP camps. From personal observation, the IDPs live in deplorable situation at all weather and there seems to be no hope to resettle families to their natal resettlement location. According to Imasuen (2015) and Alvarez-Garcia et. al. (2019), Nigeria practices the collectivist culture with emotional dependence, roles and responsibilities which are considered to be a contributory factor to the wellbeing of the family. Family values are a significant predictor of children antisocial behavior, and a strong positive family value can check the incidence of antisocial behavior. Therefore, there is need to reinforce a resettlement plan where families are kept intact to uphold the cherished values of the society.

Results on the coping strategies of IDPs on table 3 indicate that the survival strategies involve dependence on government interventions, donations from philanthropic organizations or individuals and from scavenging from around. The National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria makes provision for the protection of the general and specific Rights of IDPs, their rights to protection from displacement, rights to protection and assistance during displacement. The assistance that comes from government is once in a while as reported in this study, this is inconsistent with the policy on IDP support. There is a major concern whether this policy is properly implemented and if the officers in charge of these camps are aware of the existence of this policy document and if the government has provided sufficient support for the implementation of this policy. Olarenwaju et. al. (2018) in an independent study revealed that people living in IDP camps use available economic opportunities comprising of vocational services and skill acquisition to improve on their financial support, other interventions as reported include education, prayer and religious fortitude. Olarenwaju et. al (2018) conducted a study in Adamawa state using 116 women only (single girls, married women and widowed) to probe into the challenges of forced displacement, the results showed these challenges to be absence of care, lack of freedom, financial problem, family disintegration and poor education. A further study by Ikediashi & Akande (2015) on the traumatic experiences of people living in the IDP camps in Makurdi metropolis using intact households of 345 households found that there is high rate of family breakdown, runaway children, early initiation to early sex and lose of family values as some of the challenges facing people living in the IDP camps.

When the family passes through situations of conflicts, it impacts negatively on its members. This situation is further enhanced by external pressure such as interference in the camp and exposure of the family to outside the home environment and this is not in the control of the families.

The implication of the insecurity situation in Benue state especially for people living in the IDP camps suffer from the effect camp life has the on education of children, family stability and cohesion, peace and progress of the state and Nigeria in general.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Family values are important for sustainable family living and for the protection and rights of individuals in the society. In the absence or loss of family values, individuals and the society in general suffer from critical behavioral challenges that can threaten the survival of any nation. This study probed family values and the loss of values as a result of staying in the IDP camps by intact families in Benue State, the findings revealed some changes that has occurred, and the coping strategies adopted by families to cope with these changes. Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. Families and traditional custodians of values such as the elders and traditional rulers should sustain families' values through teaching, folklores using radio and television programs. These are programs that can aired live for the listening and viewing participation of the IDPs
2. Government is also responsible for people living in the IDP camps and in conjunction with other non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations should synergies efforts to bring succor to these people, most importantly to resettle people back to their ancestral places, provide security and a source of livelihood for people who have been displaced for so long.
3. The family is the basic unit of the society and is responsible for the transmission of values and norms of the society, the family as the first agent of socialization should be held responsible in the loss of family values, therefore family members should strive to hold on to the trado-cultural norms that have been transmitted from one generation to another.

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