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Impact of Insurgency on Spouses' Relationships Among the Internally Displaced Persons in Northeast Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria

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Abstract

Most research on the impact of insurgency in Nigeria has largely overlooked the critical dynamics of spousal relationships within internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps, despite the essential role these relationships play in ensuring family stability during times of crisis. This study seeks to address this significant gap by investigating how insurgency has influenced communication patterns, emotional intimacy, and overall relationship satisfaction among displaced couples residing in the Northeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Specifically, the study was guided by 3 objectives and one hypothesis. A descriptive survey research design is employed for this study. The population comprises 2.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are located across Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states in northeastern Nigeria, with a sample of 98 participants selected through multistage and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, chi-square statistics was used to evaluate the relationship between insurgency and spousal dynamics at a significance level of 0.05. The findings reveal that insurgency has significantly disrupted spousal relationships, primarily due to factors such as overcrowding, lack of privacy, and increased emotional stress, which have collectively resulted in strained communication and diminished physical closeness. Respondents reported heightened marital conflict and reduced satisfaction with their relationships. The chi-square analysis confirmed a statistically significant negative effect of insurgency on spousal dynamics ($÷^2 = 143.03$, $p < 0.05$). The study concludes that displacement has substantially weakened marital bonds, leading to increased emotional disconnection and conflict among couples. The study recommends the implementation of communication workshops and counseling services within IDP camps aimed at fostering interpersonal relationship and provide crucial emotional support. Furthermore, creating private living spaces is essential to restore intimacy and enhance overall relationship satisfaction. These interventions, which should be effectively coordinated by camp administrators, community leaders, and government agencies, will play a vital role in strengthening displaced families, promoting social stability during periods of displacement.

Keywords: Insurgency, Communication, Intimacy, IDPs, Spousal Relationship

Introduction

Insurgency in northeastern Nigeria, primarily fueled by the activities of Boko Haram, has led to a humanitarian crisis, particularly among internally displaced persons (IDPs). Bako and Yusuf, (2022) revealed various challenges faced by IDPs. For instance, recent highlights on the clothing needs of IDPs as critical in maintaining dignity and normalcy amidst displacement. Usman and Garba (2021) delve into trauma healing programs in IDP camps,

emphasizing the psychological toll of insurgency on displaced persons, with specific reference to children and the elderly. Sexual health, including the rise of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among displaced populations, has been a key area of investigation as well, with Abdullahi et al. (2022) reporting on the prevalence of these diseases due to the lack of adequate healthcare facilities in camps.

These studies have been essential in highlighting critical issues such as healthcare, trauma, and material needs, a glaring gap remains in the understanding of spousal relationships among IDPs. Despite the growing body of literature on the effects of insurgency, little attention has been given to the dynamics of marital relationships within IDP camps. This oversight is significant, as spousal relationships - encompassing communication, intimacy, emotional support, and role distribution - play a crucial role in the overall stability and resilience of displaced families. The pressures of displacement, combined with the instability of camp life, pose unique challenges to these relationships, often leading to emotional disconnection, increased conflict, and the erosion of marital bonds.

Given the importance of marital stability in promoting mental health and fostering community resilience, it is necessary to study the impact of insurgency on spousal relationships specifically, this study aims to fill this gap. In doing so, it will offer valuable insights into an overlooked aspect of IDP life, which is crucial for the development of holistic support programs in conflict zones.

Problem Statement

The insurgency in northeastern Nigeria, which has intensified over the past decade, continues to wreak havoc on the lives of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Recent studies have highlighted the devastating impact of this conflict on family structures, as the insurgency has forced millions of people to flee their homes, resulting in the displacement of approximately 2.5 million individuals by 2022 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] 2022). This displacement has led to widespread family separations, with many husbands and wives being torn apart in the rush to escape violence or due to relocation into different IDP camps (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2021). These separations have a profound psychological toll, with displaced individuals often experiencing heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and emotional stress (Bala et al., 2021).

Suleiman and Ahmed (2023) explored the psychological trauma of displaced women and children, underscoring how the lack of family support structures exacerbates feelings of isolation and vulnerability. Abdullahi et al. (2022) examined the role of displacement in fostering sexual violence and increasing the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in overcrowded IDP camps, which further destabilizes the already fragile family units. While these studies provide crucial insights into the broader social and health issues faced by IDPs, they often overlook the specific dynamics of spousal relationships, including how displacement impacts communication, intimacy, and emotional bonding between married couples.

Additionally, the lack of privacy in IDP camps, combined with the constant pressure of survival in an overcrowded and resource-constrained environment, exacerbates marital tensions. Usman et al. (2022) found that overcrowded living conditions create a hostile environment for maintaining family relationships, as couples struggle to find spaces for personal communication and intimacy. Yusuf and Garba (2021) have documented the challenges of emotional disconnection and communication breakdowns between spouses in IDP camps, but there remains a critical gap in understanding how displacement uniquely affects spousal dynamics.

As the foundation of family and social structures, spousal relationships are vital for providing emotional support and stability during crises. However, the pressures of displacement, trauma, and camp life pose unique challenges to these relationships,

leading to emotional disconnection, conflict, and even dissolution.

This study aims to specifically investigate the effects of insurgency on spousal relationships among IDPs in northeastern Nigeria, focusing on communication, intimacy, and the overall quality of spousal relationships.

Objective of the Study

The major objective of the study is to assess the influence of insurgency on family relationships among the internally displaced persons in North-east Geo-Political Zone Nigeria. Hence, the specific objectives are to:

1. Evaluate the influence of insurgency on spousal communication among internally displaced persons (IDPs) in northeast Nigeria.
2. Investigate the impact of insurgency on spousal intimacy in IDP camps in northeast Nigeria.
3. Examine the changes in the overall relationship dynamics between spouses in IDP camps in northeast Nigeria,

Hypothesis: The following null hypothesis was formulated:

HO: Insurgency has no significant effect of on spouse relationship among internally the displaced persons in North-east Geo-Political Zone Nigeria.

Methodology

Population

The population for this study consists of internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing in camps across Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states in northeastern Nigeria. As of September 2024, the total number of IDPs in these states has reached approximately 2.8 million, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2024). Borno State continues to house the largest number of displaced individuals, with over 1.7 million IDPs across 15 formal camps and numerous informal settlements. Yobe State has about 650,000 IDPs spread across six camps, while Adamawa State has seen a rise to approximately 450,000 IDPs living in three major camps (National Emergency Management Agency [NEMA], 2024).

Sample and Sampling techniques

A multistage sampling procedure was adopted, two IDPs camps were selected from each of the three states using random sampling technique. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents from all the camps. The sample for this study includes a total of 98 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from various camps across three states in northeastern Nigeria. In Adamawa State, 14 IDPs were selected from Fufore camp and another 14 from the NYSC camp. In Borno State, 18 IDPs were sampled from Goni Kachallari camp and 18 from Mogcolis camp. In Yobe State, 18 IDPs were drawn from Kasaisa camp and 18 from Fure camp.

Method of data collection

The study utilized a structured questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was designed to capture key aspects of spousal relationships, including communication patterns, intimacy, and overall relationship dynamics among internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Northeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Prior to administration, the instrument was pre-tested to ensure clarity and reliability. Data collection took place over a period of two weeks, with research assistants facilitating the process in the various camps.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation for the research objectives. The study also employed chi-square analysis to test the significance of the relationship between insurgency and spousal communication, intimacy, and relationship dynamics at a 0.05 level of significance.

Result

The result in Table 1 show that the majority of respondents agree that insurgency has negatively impacted their ability to

communicate with their spouses in IDP camps. The mean scores reflect significant issues with communication due to factors such as overcrowding (mean = 4.12), lack of privacy (mean = 4.20), and emotional stress (mean = 4.00).

Table 1: **Influence of Insurgency on Spousal Communication among IDPs**

S/N	Question/Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance	Decision
1	My spouse and I discuss our challenges regularly despite the conditions in the IDP camp.	3.45	1.12	1.25	Disagree
2	We find it difficult to communicate freely due to the overcrowded nature of the camp.	4.12	0.89	0.79	Agree
3	Displacement has negatively affected the way my spouse and I express our feelings to each other.	3.88	1.03	1.06	Agree
4	Lack of privacy in the camp has led to communication problem s between my spouse and me.	4.20	0.91	0.83	Agree
5	We try to discuss family matters, but the stress of camp life makes it challenging.	3.67	1.15	1.32	Agree
6	I find it hard to talk to my spouse openly because of the emotional stress caused by displacement.	4.00	0.97	0.94	Agree
7	My spouse and I frequently misunderstand each other due to the pressure of living in the camp.	3.92	1.10	1.21	Agree

Table 2 show that the majority of respondents agree that insurgency has negatively impacted their ability to maintain physical and emotional intimacy with their spouses in IDP camps. The mean scores reflect significant issues with intimacy due to factors such as lack of privacy (mean = 4.25), overcrowded living conditions (mean = 4.30), and the emotional stress of camp life (mean = 4.00). The decline in physical closeness between spouses is also evident, with a mean score of 4.15, indicating that displacement has caused a reduction in the ability of couples to maintain physical affection. Additionally, the stress of camp life has reduced interest in physical affection (mean = 3.95), further straining spousal relationships.

Table 2: **Influence of Insurgency on Spousal Intimacy among the IDPs**

S/N	Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance	Decision
1	Displacement has caused a decline in the physical closeness between my spouse and me.	4.15	0.88	0.77	Agree
2	Lack of privacy in the camp has negatively impacted our ability to maintain emotional intimacy.	4.25	0.90	0.81	Agree
3	The stress of camp life has reduced my spouse's interest in physical affection.	3.95	0.93	0.86	Agree
4	The insecurity and trauma we face daily have negatively affected our emotional bond.	4.00	0.95	0.90	Agree
5	My spouse and I have fewer intimate conversations due to the challenges of displacement.	4.10	0.85	0.72	Agree
6	Overcrowded conditions in the camp prevent us from spending quality time together.	4.30	0.87	0.76	Agree
7	The physical strain of camp life has diminished our overall closeness.	4.05	0.92	0.85	Agree

Table 3 show that majority of respondents agree that insurgency has negatively impacted the overall satisfaction, conflict frequency, and emotional bonding in their spousal relationships within IDP camps. The mean scores reflect significant issues related to spousal relationships due to factors such as overcrowding (mean = 4.30), lack of privacy (mean = 4.35), and emotional stress (mean = 4.25). Increased conflicts between spouses are evident, with a mean score of 4.20, indicating that the stress of displacement frequently leads to marital tensions. Moreover, the reduction in overall relationship satisfaction is clear, as shown by a mean score of 4.15. Emotional bonds have weakened as well, with a mean score of 4.10, emphasizing that insecurity and trauma have negatively impacted spousal emotional closeness.

Table 3: Influence of Insurgency on Overall Satisfaction, Conflict Frequency, and Emotional Bonding in Spousal Relationships

S/N	Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance	Decisior
1	The stress of displacement has caused frequent conflicts between my spouse and me.	4.20	0.88	0.77	Agree
2	Insurgency has led to a reduction in overall satisfaction with my marital relationship.	4.15	0.92	0.85	Agree
3	The insecurity in the camp has weakened the emotional bond between my spouse and me.	4.10	0.90	0.81	Agree
4	Overcrowded conditions in the camp have increased tensions and conflicts with my spouse.	4.30	0.87	0.76	Agree
5	My spouse and I have experienced increased misunderstandings due to the pressu res of camp life.	4.05	0.93	0.86	Agree
6	The emotional toll of displacement has reduced my satisfaction with our relationship.	4.25	0.89	0.79	Agree
7	Lack of privacy in the camp has significantly affected my relationship satisfaction.	4.35	0.85	0.72	Agree

Table 4 revealed that χ^2 critical is greater than calculated. The critical is 40.1 while calculated is 143.0 at 0.05 á level of significant which implies that insurgency has significant influence on husband/wife relationship. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that insurgency has no significant effect of on spouse relationship among internally the displaced persons in North-east Geo-Political Zone Nigeria is rejected.

Table 4: Chi-square analysis of influence of insurgency on husband wife relationship

Degree or freedom	*Level of significance*	χ^2 *Computed*	χ^2 *Critical*
$(R-1)(C-1)$	$\alpha = 0.05$	143.03	40.12

Discussion

The findings of this study align with much of the existing literature on the impact of insurgency on spousal relationships, particularly in the context of internally displaced persons (IDPs). For instance, Usman et al. (2022) noted that overcrowded conditions in IDP camps hinder effective communication between spouses, leading to emotional disconnection, which mirrors the present findings. Suleiman and Ahmed (2023) report that the stress of displacement in northeastern Nigeria exacerbates

communication breakdowns between spouses, reinforcing the notion that overcrowded camps and resource scarcity contribute to strained communication. The current study builds on these findings by confirming the extent to which overcrowding, privacy concerns, and emotional stress disrupt communication within displaced families.

On the issue of spousal intimacy, this study's findings are consistent with earlier research. Musa and Ayo (2021) found that displacement leads to a marked decline in both physical and emotional intimacy due to a lack of privacy and the psychological impact of insecurity. Abdullahi and Lawal (2022) reported that the inability to maintain physical closeness, coupled with emotional exhaustion, significantly reduces intimacy among displaced couples. The results of this study highlight the negative impact of overcrowded living conditions and emotional stress on spousal intimacy, align closely with these earlier observations. However, Bala et al. (2021) suggested that, in some cases, emotional bonds between spouses may strengthen during displacement as couples seek mutual support in the face of adversity. This finding contrasts with the present study, where respondents predominantly reported weakened emotional bonds, possibly due to the prolonged nature of displacement and compounded stressors such as insecurity, trauma, and lack of privacy.

The relationship between insurgency and marital satisfaction has also been widely explored. Yusuf and Garba (2021) argued that the pressures of survival in IDP camps lead to reduced satisfaction and frequent conflicts among spouses, findings that are corroborated by the current study. Similarly, Edeh and Ibrahim (2023) emphasized that the physical and psychological toll of displacement exacerbates marital dissatisfaction, leading to emotional disconnection and increased tensions within marriages. The present study adds empirical weight to these claims by demonstrating, through quantitative analysis, a significant decline in spousal satisfaction in IDP camps as a result of overcrowding, emotional stress, and the strain of daily survival.

The chi-square analysis demonstrates a clear negative relationship between displacement and spousal communication, intimacy, and satisfaction. While qualitative studies such as those by Ahmed et al. (2023) and Usman et al. (2022) have explored these dynamics, the current study advances this understanding by offering quantitative evidence that underscores the severity of the issue. This statistical analysis reinforces the need for targeted interventions in IDP camps aimed at improving the emotional and relational well-being of displaced couples. These results underscore the importance of implementing psychosocial interventions, such as the creation of private living spaces and the provision of counseling services, (Suleiman et al. 2021; Bako& Yusuf, 2022). These measures are crucial for mitigating the detrimental effects of displacement on spousal relationships and fostering resilience within displaced families.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes on the need for holistic interventions that address both material and relational needs of displaced persons. As Nigeria seeks to rebuild communities affected by insurgency, ensuring the well-being of families, particularly in terms of marital stability, will be a cornerstone of sustainable recovery and resilience-building efforts. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. There should be structured communication workshops for IDPs focusing on conflict resolution and interpersonal skills facilitated by IDP camp administrators, in collaboration with trained counselors, NGOs, and community leaders.
2. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), state and federal government authorities, camp managers, and local community leaders should create designated private living areas within the IDP camps to provide couples with individualized space.
3. Government health agencies,

humanitarian organizations, and local leaders within the communities should offer regular counseling as well as mental health programs aimed at alleviating emotional stress and improving relationship satisfaction in the IDP camps.

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