

Learners' Support Systems for Internally Displaced Learners in Riverine Communities in Delta State

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Abstract:

The study undertook a situational analysis of learners' support systems for internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State. Three research questions were raised and two hypotheses were tested for the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 315 internally displaced learners in nine riverine communities in Delta State affected by flood. A structured and validated questionnaire was used for data collection. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's alpha statistic which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.82, 0.79 and 0.87 for the three sections with an overall reliability co-efficient value of 0.73. Frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings of the study revealed that internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State perceived that learner support systems are not available at the disposal when flood crisis affected their communities. Respondents perceived that learner support systems at their disposal are utilised to a low extent and were not satisfied with the learner support systems at their disposal when flood crisis affected their communities. The study also revealed that male and female internally displaced learners did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent of utilisation and satisfaction of learner support systems at the disposal in riverine communities in Delta State. It was recommended that government should provide a robust logistic plan for internally displaced learners with effective learner support systems to ensure continuous teaching and learning conditions in times of man-made and natural disasters.

Keyword: learner support systems, internally displaced learners, riverine communities, Delta State, Nigeria

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I. INTRODUCTION

Conceptually, internal displaced persons are persons suffering from uncontrolled domestic conflict that leads to large scale national crisis. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA, 2004), internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid armed conflict, situations of generalized conflict violations of human rights or natural or manmade disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) (2007), the phenomenon of internally displaced persons is widely identified as a post-Cold war due to changing patterns of conflict from intra-state to inter-state (Adewale, 2016).

Over 25 million people worldwide have been uprooted within their own country as a result of conflict and human rights violations in particular as consequence of civil war, inter-communal violence and government repression not to mention large-scale development infrastructure projects and natural disasters (UNOCHA, 2004). Although, climate change, substance abuse and terrorism are major themes in international affairs, the case of internally displaced persons

is gradually becoming a gigantic issue in Africa and in most less developing nations of the world. At the outbreak of humanitarian conflict, it is not easy to ascertain the number and internally displaced people in a particular area.

Internally displaced persons have been forced to abandon their homes precisely the same reasons as refugees. However, it is important to mention that internally displaced persons are not refugees. According to the 1951 Convention, Art 1A(2), Protocol in Mooney (2005), a refugee is a person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.

The differences between a refugee and internal displaced person according to the 1951 convention are

- There has to be a "well-founded fear of persecution" and this fear must be linked to one of the enumerated grounds for one to be called a refugee. The IDP definition is much broader, and includes natural and human-made disasters.
- A person becomes a refugee only when he or she crosses an international border whereas an internally displaced person remains within his or her country

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- The legal status of refugee is set by an international legal document. No similar binding document defines internally displaced persons
- The status of refugee entitles the individual to certain rights. Being internally displaced does not entitle one to any additional rights – internally displaced persons have the same rights as other citizens of the country

Burns, Wickramage, Musah, Siriwardhana and Checchi, (2018) maintained that despite the outbreak of internal displaced persons all over the world, there is still no recognized international agency mandated to handle issues of IDPs. A notable lack of support networks system results in a lack of provision of basic human needs for IDPs. One of such needs is education. The consequences of internal displacement go beyond complete breakdown of teaching and learning activities, it also leads to loss of human resources and physical infrastructure and “out of school students”. Failure to provide education for internally displaced persons either as a result of conflict or as a result of natural catastrophic may deprive them of one of their fundamental rights.

The introduction of learner support systems that can allow internally displaced persons; in this case, internally displaced learners gain access to education cannot be over emphasized (Ifejiofor & Nwasor, 2020). The term, internally displaced learners arise when learners are sent packing from their local school due to conflict, insurgency or natural emergency situations. Making life easy for internally displaced learners in their educational journey could be cushioned with the provision of learners’ support systems (Ifejiofor & Nwasor, 2020). Suffice to say, therefore that, learners support systems are social services provided to facilitate effective social, psychological and educational adjustment among internal displaced persons to enable them overcome the trauma of their displacement.

Learner support systems stimulate students to overcome the barriers associated with learning. Babatude (2010) posited that learners’ support systems assist learners to cultivate a sense of direction and become motivated in their academic work. It also develops in them a sense of belongingness to the institution as well as to help them graduate at the shortest possible time. Collectively, Amini (2012) asserted that learners’ support system encompasses provision of counselling services, library services, media resources centre, feedback services, orientation, study guide or kits services, face-to-face tutoring and administrative support services geared towards assisting students successfully achieve their academic goals at shortest possible time.

Learners’ support systems according to Chander and Venkaiah in Zabairu (2014), are complementary services provided the learners through personal contact programmes, counselling, organization of resource centres, library facilities, telephone teaching, interactive teaching through TV and Radio, and other similar activities to promote learning. Learner support system is a term used to subsume all interactions between institutional personnel and students (prospective and registered) intended to assist them in meeting their objectives from the point of first inquiry through graduation and often for life time (Commonwealth of Learning, 2003).

The importance of learner support systems as outlined by Zabairu (2014) includes;

1. Providing all information that learners need
2. Encouraging students to fully utilize the available instructional facilities in the school environment
3. Motivating learners to assimilate what they learn in the school environment; Providing necessary counselling services to students
4. Creating a friendly environment among students in the school environment

In emergency situations such as flood, as in the case of most riverine communities in Delta State and other states in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, displaced students are found staying in IDP camps. Given the geographical location of Delta State, thousands of people, including students are affected in one way or the other by the over flow of the River Niger. Majority of the displaced persons live makeshift settlements in the bush and camps along roadside where they are less exposed to flood until the water recede. In Delta State, the riverine communities affected by flood are mostly in Isoko North and South, Ndokwa East, Oshimili South, Burutu, Ughelli North and South, Patani and Bomadi Local Government Areas. In Isoko North and South Local Government Areas, Ovwodokpokpo in Igbide town, Uzere and Oleh are the major riverine communities affected by flood.

In Ughelli North and South Local Government Areas, Oteri, Oto-Jeremi, Agbarharo-otor and Agbarho are some of the riverine communities affected by flood. Oluchi Oobeze, Umuagulu, Okapiai-Ashaka, Obodoyibo and Anieze communities in Okapi kingdom are usually ravaged by flood in Ndokwa East Local Government Area. In Ndokwa East, Aboh, Adai-Obiaka, Utuoku, Onyah, Asaba Ase, Utchi, Obeze communities are also affected. In Oshimili South Local Government Area, Asaba and Abala-Oshimili axis are also surrounded by flood. The whole of Burutu, Patani and Bomadi Local Government Areas look like a flowing river because these communities are coastal towns.

Evidently, existing social services such as schools, sanitation, accommodation and primary health care in these riverine communities are overstretched by the influx of IDPs due to the flood. Many of the classrooms are turned to shelter homes. This situation increases the number of children being out of school (Burns et al., 2018). It is usually a common practice in these riverine communities that there is no chance for students to go to schools because at this time, each and every person is struggling to survive. It is this realization that makes the essence of learner support systems an integral part of any sort intervention strategies delivered to flood affected communities. It is believed that, learner support systems will about normalcy in the educational welfare of children in the affected riverine communities in Delta State.

From empirical survey, there seems to be paucity of research works on the state of learner support systems at the disposal of internally displaced learners in riverine communities affected by flood in Delta State. It is against this backdrop that this study undertook a situational analysis of learners’ support systems for internally displaced learners in riverine

communities in Delta State. Specifically, the study to determine the availability, utilisation and satisfaction of learner support systems at the disposal of internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What is the adequacy of learner support systems at the disposal of internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State?
2. What is the extent of utilisation of learner support systems at the disposal of internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State?
3. What is the extent of satisfaction of learner support systems at the disposal of internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State?

III. METHOD

The study was carried out in riverine communities in Delta State. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The survey research design was adopted because the study involved collecting data from a sample of internally displaced learners regarding the availability, utilisation and satisfaction of learner support systems in riverine communities in Delta State. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in determining the sample population of the study. The basis for using purposive sampling technique was because the respondents were selected from riverine communities affected by flood in 2012 and 2018. Thus, the researcher sample 35 secondary school students from one community affected by flood in Isoko North and South, Ndokwa East, Oshimili South, Burutu, Ughelli North and South, Patani and Bomadi Local Government Areas. This brought the sample size to 315 respondents. A structured and validated questionnaire containing seven items was used for data collection. The adequacy section of the instrument was structured on a two point rating scale of Available (2) and Not Available (1). The utilization was structured on a four point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE) = 4; High Extent (HE) = 3; Low Extent (LE) = 2 and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1. The satisfaction section was structured on a four point rating scale of Strongly Satisfactory (SS) = 4; Satisfactory (S) = 3; Dissatisfactory (D) = 2; Strongly Dissatisfactory (SD) = 1. The face and content validity of the instrument was validated by one experts in Adult Education with specialization in Distance Education as well as a Measurement and Evaluation expert all in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's alpha statistic which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.82, 0.79 and 0.87 for the three sections with an overall reliability co-efficient value of 0.73. The validated questionnaire was administered with the assistance nine research assistants, mostly secondary school teachers in the nine riverine communities affected by flood used in the study. They facilitated proper filling and retrieval of all the questionnaires. Frequency count and percentage were used to answer research question one. Any item above 50 percent is regarded as available while less than 50 percent is not available. Mean and standard deviation were used to

answer the research questions two and three. Any mean score equals or above 2.5 is accepted as either great extent or satisfactory while any mean response from 2.49 and below are low extent and dissatisfactory. T-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. A hypothesis was accepted where the p-value is equal to or greater than the alpha level of 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), at a degree of freedom; otherwise, the null hypothesis was rejected. The analysis was carried out using SPSS version 23.0

IV. RESULTS

Research Question one

What is the adequacy of learner support systems at the disposal of internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State?

Data collected in respect to this research question were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage ratings of respondents on the adequacy of learner support systems at the disposal of internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State (N=315)

S/N	Learner support systems	(A) (NA) Percentage				Remarks
		A	NA			
1	Printed learning materials	298	17	95%	5%	A
2	Counselling Services	27	288	9%	91%	NA
3	Online learning materials	14	301	4%	96%	NA
4	Weekend tutorial sessions	19	296	6%	94%	NA
5	Mini library services	65	250	21%	79%	NA
6	Orientation for examination	258	57	82%	18%	A
7	Organize timetable for intensive teaching	86	229	27%	73%	NA

Data in Table 1 revealed that amongst the seven learner support systems, only two learner support systems were considered available by internally displaced learners. This is because the percentage availability of printed learning materials and orientation for examination were 50% or above which were above the cut-off point. The remaining five learner support systems had their percentage availability below 50% which is the cut-off point. This indicates that they were not available on the average. On the whole, internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State perceived that learner support systems are not available at the disposal when flood crisis affected their communities.

Research Question two

What is the extent of utilisation of learner support systems at the disposal of internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State?

Data collected in respect to this research question were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 2

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on their extent of utilisation of learner support systems at the disposal of internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State (N=315)

S/N	Extent to which learner support systems are utilized in riverine communities	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1	Printed learning materials	3.94	0.87	HE
2	Counselling Services	1.27	1.01	VLE
3	Online learning materials	1.06	0.59	VLE
4	Weekend tutorial sessions	1.19	0.78	VLE
5	Mini library services	2.21	0.66	LE
6	Orientation for examination	3.78	1.03	HE
7	Organize timetable for intensive teaching	2.05	0.65	LE
Grand mean		2.21		LE

The grand mean of 2.21 means that internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State perceived that learner support systems at their disposal are utilised to a low extent when flood crisis affected their communities. Data in Table 2 show that respondents perceived that two learner support systems with mean ratings of 3.78 and 3.94 were utilized to a high extent. Two learner support systems with mean ratings of 2.21 and 2.05 were utilized to a low extent while the remaining three items with mean ratings ranging from 1.06 to 1.27 were utilized to a very low extent. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range which shows that the respondents were homogeneous in their opinions.

Research Question three

What is the extent of satisfaction of learner support systems at the disposal of internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State?

Data collected in respect to this research question were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 3

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on their extent of satisfaction of learner support systems at the disposal of internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State (N=315)

S/N	Extent of learners satisfaction of learner support systems in riverine communities	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1	Printed learning materials	3.73	0.47	S
2	Counselling Services	1.12	0.84	SD
3	Online learning materials	1.01	0.32	SD
4	Weekend tutorial sessions	2.16	0.66	D
5	Mini library services	2.11	0.53	D
6	Orientation for examination	3.64	0.77	S
7	Organize timetable for intensive teaching	2.38	0.49	D
Grand mean		2.31		LE

The grand mean of 2.31 means that internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State are not satisfied with the learner support systems at their disposal when flood crisis affected their communities. Data in Table 3 show that respondents were satisfied with two learner support systems with mean ratings of 3.73 and 3.64. Respondents

expressed dissatisfactory with three learner support systems with mean ratings of 2.11, 2.16 and 2.38 and were strongly dissatisfactory with the remaining two items with mean ratings ranging from 1.01 to 1.12. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range which shows that the respondents were homogeneous in their opinions.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female internally displaced learners on the extent of utilisation of learner support systems at the disposal in riverine communities in Delta State

Table 4: t-test analysis of male and female internally displaced learners on the extent of utilisation of learner support systems at the disposal in riverine communities in Delta State (N=315)

Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	P-value	Decision
Male	185	65.03	12.14	312	0.311	NS
Female	130	54.88	10.79			

Table 4 shows that the p-value of 0.311 at 312 degree of freedom is greater than the alpha value of 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). This means that the respondents did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent of utilisation of learner support systems at the disposal in riverine communities in Delta State as a result of gender. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female internally displaced learners on the extent of satisfaction of learner support systems at the disposal in riverine communities in Delta State

Table 5: t-test analysis of male and female internally displaced learners on the extent of satisfaction of learner support systems at the disposal in riverine communities in Delta State (N=315)

Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	P-value	Decision
Male	185	59.52	13.09	312	0.160	NS
Female	130	43.91	11.84			

Table 5 shows that the p-value of 0.160 at 312 degree of freedom is greater than the alpha value of 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). This means that the respondents did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent of satisfaction of learner support systems at the disposal in riverine communities in Delta State as a result of gender. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

V. DISCUSSION

Findings of the study revealed that internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State perceived that learner support systems are not available at the disposal when flood crisis affected their communities. In addition, the study disclosed that, printed learning materials and orientation for examination support systems were available while counselling services, online learning materials, weekend tutorial sessions, mini library services and organize timetable for intensive teaching support systems were not available.

The study also disclosed that internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State perceived that learner support systems at their disposal are utilised to a low extent when flood crisis affected their communities. More so, it was revealed that were printed learning materials and orientation for examination support systems utilized by respondents to a high extent. Counselling services, online learning materials and weekend tutorial sessions were utilized to a very low extent and mini library services and organize timetable for intensive teaching support systems were utilized to a low extent

Furthermore, the outcome of the study disclosed that internally displaced learners in riverine communities in Delta State are not satisfied with the learner support systems at their disposal when flood crisis affected their communities. The study revealed that respondents were satisfied with the availability of printed learning materials and orientation for examination support systems at their disposal. However, they were dissatisfied with weekend tutorial sessions, mini library services and organize timetable for intensive teaching support systems. Also, they were strongly dissatisfied with counselling services and online learning materials support systems.

On the other hand, the study disclosed that male and female internally displaced learners did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent of utilisation of learner support systems at the disposal in riverine communities in Delta State. In addition, the respondents did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent of satisfaction of learner support systems at the disposal in riverine communities in Delta State as a result of gender. Therefore, the null hypotheses were accepted. This implies that both male and female internally displaced learners did not utilized and were not satisfied with the learner support systems at the disposal in riverine communities in Delta State when flood affected them. Supporting the findings of the study, a cursory visit to the various IDP camps in the riverine communities of Delta State affected by flood shows that of social amenities. Here, students are often forced to learn in the classroom sitting, kneeling or lying on the floor due to a lack of chairs and tables.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The nature of learner support systems gives less privileged learners a scaffolding avenue to gain access to quality education. Learner support services consist of a wide range of human and non-human resources that the learner needs to guide and facilitate learning in distance learning programme and disadvantaged circumstances. From the findings, the study recommended that government should provide a robust logistic plan for internally displaced learners with effective learner support systems to ensure continuous teaching and learning conditions in times of man-made and natural disasters.

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