

Problem - Focused Coping and Coping Ability of Internally Displaced Secondary and High School Learners in Yaounde Municipality

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at evaluation the impact of problem-focused coping on the coping ability of internally displaced secondary and high school learners (IDSHSLs) in Yaounde municipality, Center Region of Cameroon. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for this study. The study was substantiated by the Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman Theory, Schlosberg's Transition Theory by Ryan and Deci and Macro-analytic state-oriented theories. The population was made up of IDSHSLs in the Yaounde Municipality Center Region of Cameroon. A total of 277 IDSHSLs were effectively involved in the study. School were sampled using simple random sampling while participants were involved following purposive, convenient and snow-ball sampling approach. Quantitative data were analyzed with the support of SPSS version 21.0. They were described using frequency and proportion and Multiple-Responses Analysis to aggregate score within conceptual components. The predictive effect of problem-focused coping on the coping ability of IDSHSLs was appraised with the support of Binary Logistic Regression. The findings unfold that problem-focused as coping strategy significantly enhanced the coping potential of IDSHSLs. Based on the findings, the study recommended that IDSHSLs should be encouraged in their current move of self-determination while stakeholders at various levels shall endeavor giving them the necessary support.

KEYWORDS: *Coping strategies, Challenges, Internally displaced Secondary and high school learners, Problem-focused*

INTRODUCTION

The movement of people internally and across borders, which is part of human life has developmental, cognitive, affective, socio-cultural effects on both home and host countries. As socio-political and economic conditions worsen, many people migrate to seek better conditions in other countries (Atsenuwa & Adepoju, 2010) or locations. In Cameroon, unemployment, drought, war, poverty, crisis and lack of resources are some root causes of displacement to one region of the nation to another (Boswell, 2005). Equally in modern societies, young and old experience the emotion of being stressed. Internally displaced persons get levels of stress which increases significantly and is detrimental to their full functioning as required by the society in which they belong. Today, in the Yaounde municipality, IDPs face many challenges that in those years past, many

may not have experienced as they were growing up (De Haas, (2008). Sexting, online bullying, guns in schools, terrorism, kidnapping, and assaults are just a few of the stressors providing headlines in news stories. IDPs may face multiple stressful challenges that may include parents who divorce, blended step and half-sibling families, dating violence, technology use to harass or threaten others, social isolation, crisis of all sorts in the nation and the impact of a failing economy. The challenges of IDPs are often difficult to recognize and the stakeholders in the community need to know the impact of these challenges in order to provide the necessary support and open communication to help them deal with multiple challenging issues (Hampel, Meier, & Klimmel, 2008). This is supported by the United Nations Humanitarian Commission on which estimated that

How to cite this paper: Emma Tuanjonji | Ndi Serge Armand | Nguehan Boris | Nana Celestin "Problem - Focused Coping and Coping Ability of Internally Displaced Secondary and High School Learners in Yaounde Municipality" Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-8 | Issue-6, December 2024, pp.984-998, URL: www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd71628.pdf



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about 25 million people fall into these categories among the world population and Africa shares a significant figure of about 12.8 million people displaced, while Cameroon has about 5 million people suffering displacement. Some of these people flee to neighboring countries as refugees, while many are within the country in either relations homes or harbored by friends, or at government established camps as Internally Displaced Persons (UNHCR, 2007).

Background to the study

Historically, The UN introduced the concept of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the mid-1980s. Since then, the number of IDPs has grown rapidly not only due to mounting internal conflicts in the world such as Syria, Colombia and Afghanistan but also because the concept itself has increased their visibility. Scientifically, nearly three decades of conflict, frequent droughts and environmental hardships left 2.6 million of Somalis in displacement camps. Even though psychological impact of war and natural disasters are well documented, little is known about the unseen scars of psychological trauma in internally displaced persons in Somalia. Every year millions are forced to flee from their home around the globe, due to violence, war, and natural disasters, and some remain in displacement within their home country (UNHCR, 2010). It's reported that at the end of 2018, about 41.3 million people were living in internal displacement because of conflict and environmental hardships. 28 million new IDP cases were recorded in 2018 alone, and this surge of displacement was associated with conflict and natural disasters in 148 states.

Approximately 2.6 million people are internally displaced in Somalia. The armed conflicts and the environmental disasters affecting most parts of Somalia, led this huge number of people to flee from their homes. Somalia has been in Turmoil and political instability for the last three decades. The country experienced fierce fighting between rival groups and frequent terrorist attacks since the collapse of Siyad Bare regime in 1991, and this is the main impetus of growing IDPs in many countries today, thus indicating that we have not really learnt from the errors of the past. IDPs have numerous vulnerabilities, including poor shelter and overcrowding, lack of protection, reduced water access, food insecurity, limited access to health service, a lack of personal documentation and the growing number of forced evictions. Both maternal and child mortality are high and mental illness is quite common. World Health Organization reports that one in three persons are affected by mental

illness with people suffering from mental illness being subjected to stigma, social isolation and a huge burden of care left to their care givers (Morina et al., 2018). A systemic review in Psychiatric disorders in Refugees and IDPs in 30 studies found the prevalence rates of PTSD between 2.2 and 88.3% (7), and depression prevalence which varied between 5.1 to 81 %. A Study on IDPs in Ukraine found a prevalence of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) of 32%, while the prevalence of Depression was 22%. In Colombia a study found high levels of PTSD and Depression in IDPs, 88% and 41 % respectively (10). Roberts (2008) found that (54%) of IDPs in northern Uganda, who witnessed 20 years of conflict between a rebel group (LRA) and the government army, had probable diagnose of PTSD, and over two third (67%) of respondents had diagnostic symptoms of depression (Roberts et al., 2008). Among Somali refugees in Uganda, a study found prevalence rate of PTSD of 48% (Onyut, 2009). Another study revealed that over one third of Somali refugees (38.3 %) in Melkadid camp in Ethiopia met the symptom criteria for depression. There is a general consensus that IDP's are more likely to develop Depression and PTSD (Roberts, 2011). Roberts et al. (2009) asserted that PTSD and trauma in World Mental Health Survey by WHO found that age is significantly associated with conditional risk of PTSD, with highest risk during childhood-adolescence and people who are older than 65 years (Kessler et al., 2017). Having a lower educational attainment was significantly associated with PTSD and Depression, Higher education levels could be a protective factor for development of PTSD (Housen et al., 2017). Study on prevalence of PTSD in Syrian refugees in Turkey found that family history of mental disorders is significantly associated with PTSD. A relationship was observed between PTSD and frequency of trauma experienced. Study on mental health of IDPs in Sri Lanka found that higher number of traumatic events increases likelihood of developing PTSD and depression (Husain et al., 2004). Furthermore, conflicts and disasters often cause internal displacement. Large-scale displacement often leads to social destabilization. For instance, homes, religious system, political and economic destructions lead to new necessities among the displaced. Attempts at denying the term 'Internally Displaced Persons' (IDPs) throws up several complexes, interrelated issues.

Conceptually, according to the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, 2007), IDP's mean persons who have been forced to flee their homes suddenly or unexpectedly in large numbers as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights or natural or human made disasters,

and who are within the territory of their own country. A Global Report on Internal Displacement (IDMC, 2018) shows that displacement resulting from conflict and violence in 2017 were estimated to about 11.8 million persons; this almost the double of 2016 with a figure of 6.9 million. Majority of these displacements occurred in Sub-Saharan Africa with a figure of 5.5 million, with the Middle, East and North Africa having about 4.5 million. In recognition of the fact that an individual's health status is determined by numerous factors, the World Health Organization introduced the concept as "determinants of health". The plight of IDPs are apparently dire due to their socio-economic status (Wilkinson & Marmot, 2003). It was revealed that social factors can equally determine health status and outcomes; they identified social determinants to include a) social and economic environment comprising income, education; b) the physical environment comprising safe housing, sanitation and c) the individual's characteristics such as smoking, access to healthcare facilities. Evidence from studies suggests that IDPs are confronted with debilitating social status including lack of access to healthcare facilities (Olanrewaju et al., 2019). Similarly, Fineman (2008) argued that IDPs are marginalized, disenfranchised, and disadvantaged from mainstream society. The Global Survey estimated that of the 52 million non-refugees affected by conflict, which includes but is not limited to IDPs, 24–26 million were in school and 25–28 million were out of school (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children—WCRWC, 2004). Godagama (2012) assessed the interventions channeled through the IDP camps in Mannar District, Sri Lanka using a mixed methodology consisting of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The findings indicated that the IDPs were primarily provided with basic requirements such as preschools (92%), schools (72%), and free books mainly by the NGOs. IDMC (2008) found that twelve countries where the majority of internally displaced children had no access to education during the 2008 school-year: Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guatemala, Indonesia, Iraq, Nepal, Nigeria, Philippines, Senegal, Somalia, Yemen, and Zimbabwe. Furthermore, it has also been reported that in various countries IDPs are paid lower wages than their counterparts in the general population. The average day rate for casual construction work in Goma, DRC, is normally 1,170 CFA, but only 780 CFA for IDPs (Norwegian Refugee Council—NRC, 2014). Again, the poverty rate among IDPs has been estimated at 25 percent, compared with 20 percent for the general population (World Bank, 2011). Despondently Nigeria has been finding it increasingly difficult and is almost failing in

its task to manage its plethora of IDP predicaments (Olagunju, 2006). This situation portends danger for the citizenry and undermines the actualization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number three which is on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being at all ages (UN, 2015). Scholars have identified a wide range of health shock among IDPs in Africa. In the region, the spectrum of health shocks includes stunting (38.6%), underweight (28.4%), and wasting with proportion of 7.2% (Turnip, Klungsoyr & Hauff, 2010). In some IDP locations, diseases such as measles (20–30%) and meningococcal meningitis (0.3%) had been recorded. Similarly, epidemics of cholera, yellow fever, and recently discovered hepatitis E in IDP and refugee camps across Africa. Besides, the U.N. OCHA (2017) said that 6.1 million IDPs in Northeast Nigeria lack protection, 3.4 million lack of adequate nutrition, 6.9 million lack access to health. OCHA (2017) also reported that due to overcrowded settlements, IDPs in Nigeria suffer respiratory and other communicable diseases such as cholera and diarrhea, etc. Outbreaks of tuberculosis and dysentery were reported in displacement camps in Myanmar (International Rescue Committee—IRC, 2017). Nevertheless, International Organization for Migration (2013) report suggests that IDPs are confronted with negative coping strategies to their health challenges. Geuken (2013) reasoned that coping strategies are ways individuals deal with anticipated or actual problems. Different types of psychological distress such as depression, anxiety, sleeplessness and other mental issues are usually identified as major health need of war and displaced persons (Roberts et al., 2009). However, studies on IDPs coping Page 4/15 mechanism mostly focus on general coping strategies to livelihood barriers by IDPs. For instance, the United Nations High Commission on Refugees, (2017) found that 35% of IDPs in Host Communities in Yemen utilized child labor and 9% adopted child marriage as a coping mechanism. Similarly, Almedom (2004) stated that IDPs cope by finding meaning or purpose to displacement and staying together. While Kassam and Nanji (2006) identified supporting-seeking as a coping strategy utilized by IDPs, Ezard, et al. (2011) found that smoking hashish was commonly used by men, whereas tranquillizers were more likely to be used by women IDP as a coping strategy. Chong et al. (2022) identified challenges faced by IDPs under three themes: psychosocial impact of lockdown, significant lifestyle changes, and impact on professional progression. Meanwhile, four themes emerged in coping strategies that include behavioral strategies, re-appraisal of the uncertainties of situation, active coping mechanisms, and regulation

of emotion with coping reserve. There are indications that personality traits determine strategies to cope with challenges faced during the crisis which may either lead to resilience building or experiencing burnout. The findings of the study highlighted the urgent need to develop early preventive and intervention strategies to address the socio-cultural needs and mental health of students to mitigate stress and promote positive well-being in times of crisis. Maghan (2017) highlighted that an internal problem-solving-style by participants across all conditions reported higher stress ratings, suggesting greater sensitivity to stressful situations. Purnawat et al. (2021) report a significant efficacy problem-focused strategy in relieving psychological distress. Ryan (2013) found that college student in Ireland, both male and female, are experiencing stress levels above average and have average life satisfaction levels. Female students were found to be significantly more stressed than males who were found to engage in more active emotion focused coping than males. High usage of avoidant focused coping mechanisms was significantly related to high levels of stress and lower life satisfaction. Sadaghiani & Sorkhab (2013) concluded that two coping styles of emotion-focused and avoidance could play an important role as intermediate or one of the effective factors in the individuals in establishing negative effects such as depression, anxiety and stress. Muazzam et al. (2020) highlighted the potential of problem-focused coping strategy in maintaining sustainability and resilience. In the same line, Shimazu et al. (2006) concluded that the problem-focused coping stress management program is one of the most effective methods for coping with academic stress and job stress. López et al. (2022) concluded that the highest levels of stress are manifested by students who study only theoretical subjects. It is suggested the implementation of interventions related to the adequate management of stress. In terms of coping strategies, students showed a greater tendency towards emotional active coping, which refers to active steps to try to change situations or lessen their effects. Secondly, problem-focused coping, which involves the management of internal or environmental demands that pose a threat and decompensate the relationship between the person and his or her environment. Finally, avoidance emotional coping where the university student uses strategies focused on avoidance, distraction, distancing from the stressful event, or turning to another activity to avoid thinking about the problem. Carroll (2020) equally made a clear-cut differentiation between problem-solving coping and emotion-coping strategies. The study by López et al. (2022) aligns with this one in term of methodological

approach as it employs a survey design, but contrast by using only a questionnaire in a quantitative perspective. Diponegoro et al. (2020) highlighted the paramount role self-initiative can play in situation of distress. Nginyu (2023) found that households use severe strategies like reducing the number of meals eaten in a day, some rely on less expensive foods, reducing the quantity of food consumed, some limit consumption by adults for small children to eat well, some consuming seed held for the next season and rely on help from friends and relatives to mitigate the incidence of food shortages. Most of the IDPs put clothes and mattresses on the floor and use double beds to remedy sleeping space. All of them live in the outskirts where houses are relatively cheap. They prefer local pharmacies to hospitals since they need to spend little or nothing to consult and must not do a laboratory test. They boil water before drinking to help remedy diseases like typhoid, and malaria among others. Okpan & Ezeah (2020) reported IDPs in Nigeria experienced significant shocks before highlighting the need to focus on sustainable economic empowerment programs such as improved farming mechanism, skill acquisition, education, etc. for the IDPs as such will consequently guarantee them better coping strategies.

Contextually, according to the OCHA (2018), United Nations Council Session on Cameroon relays that the separatist armed conflict that broke out in October 2016 in Cameroon's Northwest and Southwest regions (known as the English speaking or Anglophone regions of the country), has caused the displacement of segments of the population fleeing their homes to seek sanctuaries in nearby towns, villages, and in dense forests. The office added that over 430,000 people have been internally displaced, and in addition, over 30,000 have fled out of other regions and the national territory and are seeking refuge in Yaounde and neighboring Nigeria. The majority fleeing the conflict zones have sought sanctuary in other towns and villages within the national territory, while greater majorities have fled into dense forests far from their towns and villages. If this situation is not addressed, it may further aggravate the deteriorating situation of IDPs, with a growing number of persons fleeing their natural habitation. The IDPs and refugee situation in Yaounde Center Region of Cameroon, if not properly managed, may continue to escalate and thus affecting the peace and stability of the Center Region, which will become a serious threat to the nation and international peace and security. In view of these challenges, effort must be geared towards finding solution to the plight of people displaced by either ameliorating their plight, or by finding lasting

solution to the challenges they (IDPs) are faced with. This would be achieved when all stakeholders put in efforts in addressing all forms of grievances to deescalate conflict situations, and enhance provisions of needs of people who are facing all kinds of displacement through the peace building process. It is established that Cameroon is no exception with regard to IDP's vulnerability as the population is affected by armed conflict, violence and other unhealthy happenings in the nation like pandemics and epidemics which left citizens in fixations and the need to relocate to new areas in search of refuge and peace (UNHCR, 2002). IDPs are often worse off than the resident population and examine their specific needs. Consideration is given to how different contexts and patterns of internal displacement shape people's experience. Concerns related to safety and the security of IDPs in Yaounde may have serious concerns for their safety and physical security. These concerns can be linked to the circumstances in which people flee or to the conditions they face in the new location. During armed conflict, displacement is often a survival mechanism. People leave their homes as they lose access to basic necessities in their place of residence, because they fear the approaching of military operations or after experiencing their destructive impact, notably as a consequence of violations of international humanitarian law (1999). When cities become battlefields, the effects of the hostilities on the civilian population and urban infrastructure and services can be devastating. Yet, fleeing within or from a city at war is also dangerous. People risk being killed on the way by bombing and shelling, caught in crossfire or hit by sniper fire or landmines. They may face harassment by weapon-bearers or be arrested at checkpoints due to the perception that they support or are affiliated to an adverse party to the conflict (World Disasters Report, 2002). Additionally, because of rapidly changing conflict dynamics, those who managed to reach a more secure neighborhood or another city relatively spared by the fighting may be confronted again with potential death and injury from military operations, and be uprooted for a second time (Ryan, 2001). To proceed, it's worth noting that Cameroon faces humanitarian challenges from refugees and IDP'S in six of her ten (10) regions. Cameroon is host to approximately 250,000 refugees from the Central African Republic and 93,000 refugees from Nigeria. The war against Boko Haram has generated approximately 225,000 IDPs, the conflict in the North West and south west regions of Cameroon has led to another 200,000 IDPs. As the largest donor of humanitarian assistance in Cameroon we recognize that Cameroon has been a welcoming host to refugees

for decades, but that welcome mat is starting to fray. We support United Nations effort to transition from humanitarian to development assistance, and efforts by donors and the Cameroonian government to promote livelihood and resilience efforts. Also, we will support Cameroon's effort to address food insecurity and malnutrition among vulnerable populations in the country (ICSC, 2018). We can therefore deduce that as a result of this numerical increase in refugees and IDPS in the nation of Cameroon, there are numerous unbearable challenges and extreme vulnerabilities disrupting the tenacity and social serenity of the nation especially in Yaounde municipality. This burden was generated in the heart of the researcher who deemed it relevant to investigate the sway of the challenges and coping strategies of IDPs in the above-mentioned municipality in order to fill the gap if any, where need be.

Statement of the Problem

The plight of the Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) has become a global phenomenon. Countries around the world are faced with challenges to finding lasting solutions to this problem. For example, in the area of study, residences are displaced from their home through various forms of attack, either by herdsmen or insurgency or through terrorism. In other parts of the world, it could be through militancy, persecution or natural disaster. In Cameroon through armed forces, conflicts, violence, pandemics, epidemics, Boko Haram threat, etc., in any forms, these ugly trends are witnessed; education is jeopardized, the fabric of peace is broken; lives are lost, families are separated, people are rendered homeless. These phenomena have caused untold hardship to people universally. It is worthy to note that in every displacement, those who seek for refuge face all kind of challenges, from lack of food, clothing, shelter, to lack of medical care, school and other amenities. They lack jobs, and faced with other societal ills such as rape, diseases and basic education. Also, in camps harboring the displaced persons, cases of insurgents making surprise attack are recorded. In a nutshell, leading to socio-cultural, economical, physical, psychological, educational, language and communication challenges and lots more. The displaced persons go through these numerous challenges despite the fact that home government, international organizations and nongovernmental organizations offer one form of assistance in support of these displaced persons, but instead to end their sufferings, they continue to experience untold hardship without any lasting solution. That is why the researcher seeks to investigate and give an evaluation of coping strategies on the challenges faced by

IDSHSLs in the Yaounde municipality, Center Region of Cameroon, which is very essential for their rehabilitation and successful education and professional career.

Research objective

This study aimed at evaluation the impact of problem-focused coping on the coping ability of internally displaced secondary and high school learners in Yaounde municipality, Center Region of Cameroon.

This research objective was substantiated by the following hypothesis:

There is no significant relationship between problem-focused coping and the coping ability of internally displaced secondary and high school learners in Yaounde municipality, Center Region of Cameroon.

Justification of the Study

The reason for carrying out this study was based on the fact that IDPs have needs and difficulties that could affect their cognitive, economic, psychological, physical, socio-cultural, educational and thus their holistic development. Furthermore, these needs and challenges have to be addressed closely so that they can grow and function like any other person in a stable society or community, much more important, succeed in their education.

Significance of the Study

For these needs and challenges to be address, a well-structured research like this one was vital to identify them, as well as the coping strategies imperative for proper adjustment and social adaptation, which could inform policy and potential helpers. In this perspective, government, parents, educational leaders, community leaders, NGOs at both national and internal level can better strategize their actions toward helping these IDSHSLs. Moreover, the reality of this study context can help in other settings facing similar problems.

Scope of the Study

Geographically, the study is limited to Yaounde Municipality in the Center Region of Cameroon. With respect to the participants, focus is placed on IDSHSL.s. Conceptually, the independent variable is problem-focused as coping strategy, and the dependent variable the challenges faced. Theoretically, the study is substantiated by the Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman theory, Schlossberg's Transition Theory, Self-Determination Theory by Ryan & Deci, and Macro-Analytic State-Oriented theories. Methodological wise, the study followed a cross-sectional survey design with essentially quantitative approach whereby data were collected using a structured questionnaire.

Operational Definition of Terms

Challenges: Challenges are potential stressors that we feel we cannot handle. When we think of a situation as a challenge, we are focused on the positive: the rewards or personal growth we will attain when we succeed (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Horikosh (2023) defines a challenge as a situation, task, or problem that is difficult, new, or complex and presents the possibility of testing skills or resources and being interpreted as or transformed into an opportunity. Although this preliminary working definition is based only on a limited number of examples and should be further examined in more comprehensive studies, its strength lies in it being able to accommodate the essences of the interconnected aspects of the challenges that are studied separately in the above examples. From the perspective of positive psychology, with an emphasis on the major themes, the concept of challenge is a critically important element for well-being and optimal functioning because it is explicitly and extensively embedded in the theories, models, and definitions of well-being, flow, intrinsic motivation, curiosity, mindset, learning, stress coping, mental toughness, and posttraumatic growth, among others. In the context of this work challenges refers to (he situation of being faced with something that needs great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully and therefore tests a person's ability.

Coping: Folkman (1984) opined that coping is constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage, master, reduce or tolerate the specific external and internal demands that are created and appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person by the stressful transaction. Folkman & Lazarus (1980) defined coping as an attempt to master, tolerate, or reduce internal or external stressors that an individual perceives as exceeding existing resources. In this work, coping means adjusting to unusual demands, or stressors. This requires giving a greater effort and using greater energy than what's needed in the daily routines of life. Prolonged mobilization of effort can contribute to elevated levels of stress-related hormones and to eventual physical breakdown and illness. Lazarus & Folkman (1984) examined that coping Strategies are current cognitive and/or behavioral efforts adopted to deal with specific external and/or internal stresses or anxieties that are valued as challenges and beyond the control and resources of the person. Aldwin, (2007) asserted that coping strategies are the ways individuals deal with anticipated or actual problems. This also applies to dealing with experienced negative emotion. Coping strategies may not always be a fully conscious decision, but can also be an emotional

reaction. Culture can affect coping strategies through influencing the appraisal of stress and the use of coping strategy. This can be done to a small or large degree.

Coping Strategies: Coping Strategies in the context of this study is having the ability to face responsibilities, problems, or difficulties in a calm or adequate manner. Teaching adolescents how to cope with their stress may help them live a healthier lifestyle.

Internally Displaced Persons: Internally Displaced Persons are "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border (Kälin, 2008). They are also considered as persons or group of persons who have been forcefully removed from their homes or have fled to escape disasters armed conflicts, indiscriminate violence often culminating in abuse of human rights, and who have not gone outside the borders of their own country to seek refuge (OHCHR, 2007). In this study an Internally Displaced Person is someone who is forced to leave their home but who remains within their country's borders. They are often referred to as refugees, although they do not fall within the legal definitions of a refugee.

Problem-Focused or Direct Coping: Problem-focused or direct coping is a strategy that helps individuals to remove or reduce stressors in order to reduce their strain experiences (Bhagat et al., 2012). Carve & Conner-Smith (2010) relayed that problem-focused coping is aimed at problem solving and altering the source of stress: taking steps to remove, evade, or to diminish its impact. For example, if layoffs are expected, an individual may apply for other jobs or work harder at their current job to reduce the likelihood of being let go. Problem-focused coping is featured as an extension of control, because engaging in problem-focused coping strategies requires a series of acts to keep stressors under control (Bhagat et al., 2012). Here problem-focused coping is a problem-solving technique in which an individual addresses a problem or stressor directly in an attempt to alleviate or eliminate it. It therefore, includes all the active efforts to manage stressful situations and alter a troubled person's environment relationship to modify the sources of stress through individual behavior.

Methodology

Research Design

The study used a cross-sectional survey design with essentially quantitative approach whereby data were collected using a structured questionnaire which is a typical survey instrument. Survey consists essentially of collecting people's opinion on a given issue (Nana, 2018). The study is cross-sectional because it makes just an appraisal of the current situation.

Area of study

This study was carried out in Cameroon, a country located at the boundary of central and West Africa. More specifically, the study took place in the Center Region of Cameroon, and precisely in Foundi Division where Yaounde the national capital is found. Mfoundi population is mostly made up of the French speaking Cameroonians such as the Betis, Ewondos, Etons, Bassas, Haussas, and the Bamelikes (Tellen, 2007). However, there are English speaking Cameroonians from Northwest and Southwest Region in the division. A majority of parents make their living in this division as businessmen and women, small farmers but as a capital, there are good numbers of civil servants, privately employed and self-employed acting in various fields and offering sundry services. The division also contains the highest number of government workers and administrators. Most parents in this division hardly spent time with their children at home as they spent their day either in the office, work, and markets or in farms in order to raise money and meet up with the living conditions of this division. Going by the figures gathered from Mfoundi Council, the population is around 477350 inhabitants, with a population density of around 8118 inhabitants per square km. The main ethnic groups in Mfoundi include, the Bass, Ewondo and Vute.. The religions are Christianity, African Traditional Religion / Kamitism and Islam. Mfoundi has higher institutions, secondary schools as well as primary and nursery schools (CVUC, 2019).

Population of the study

The population is made up of IDPs in Mfoundi division.

Target Population

The target population of this study consists of Internally Displaced Secondary and High School Learners (IDSHSLs) in four sub-divisions of Mfoundi division, precisely Yaounde I (Nlongkak and Etoudi), Yaounde VII (Nkolbisson), Yaounde VI (Biyem-Assi), and Yaounde IV (Kondengui).

Accessible Population

It was assumed that all the targeted participants were accessible.

Sample

The sample size of the study consisted of 277 internally displaced secondary and high school learners (IDSHSLs).

Sampling Technique

The simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the schools for the study in order not to be biased. With the simple random sampling, all the individuals or subjects in the defined population had an equal and independent chance of being selected (Nana, 2018). By this method, the researcher wrote the names of all the secondary schools stratifying by the different categories of public, confessional and lay private schools in the study area on slips of papers with other blank sheets of papers folded and shuffled together. The folded papers were put in a basket for picking after shuffling. The name of the first school was registered after being chosen, and the process was repeated until all the schools were finally drawn and recorded. The IDSHSLs were sampled conveniently and using snow-ball method.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed on a Likert-scale format for both the dependent and the independent indicators.

Validity of the instrument

Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) opined that a major concern in research is the validity of the procedures and conclusions. Nana (2018), Amin (2005) and Gay *et al.* (2000) further explained that validity is the quality of a data gathering instrument or procedure that enables it to measure what it is supposed to

measure. A valid research finding is one in which there is similarity between the reality that exists in the world and the research results. Content validity, construct validity, face validity, internal validity and external validity were given prime attention. Guba's model for trustworthiness addresses ways for warding off biases in the results of qualitative analysis (Mohlokoane, 2004). In this study, however, the model is used to develop strategies that would introduce standards of quality assurance in the processing and analysis of the data. The five strategies are identified in UNISA (2003). This considers credibility, transferability, comparability, dependability and conformability. The pilot study was conducted in a secondary school in Buea municipality. After the trial-testing phase, no issue was reported with the questionnaire. The reliability for the questionnaires was 0.730, which was quite satisfactory. Generally, any reliability coefficient of 0.5 and above is acceptable as a satisfactory measure of reliability (Amin, 2005; Nana, 2018), but convincing ones should be 0.7 or more on its standard scale of 0-1 or more (Nana, 2018). According to McMillan & Schumacher, (2001), the more heterogeneous a group is on the trait being measured or the greatest range of scores, the higher and more reliable the reliability. In this study, the sample was diversified in its demographic characteristics. Cronbach Alpha Reliability coefficient enabled the researcher to ascertain whether the internal consistency of the responses was satisfactory to an acceptable level (Cronbach, 1951; Nana, 2018).

Table 1: Reliability of the IDSHSLs' questionnaire for the final study

Conceptual components	Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient	Variance	N of Items	N of Cases
Problem-focused coping strategy	0.954	0.000	8	277
Challenges faced	0.941	0.000	8	277
Integrated Value Mapping (IVM)	0.902	0.005	16	277

The internal consistency assumption was not violated for all the conceptual components including the IVM with reliability coefficient values ranging from 0.902 to 0.954, all very good. This therefore implies that the items on the questionnaire were understood and answered to a satisfactory level of objectivity. The variances were all almost 0, ranging from 0.000 to 0.005, thus implying that we are more likely to be faced with highly skewed distributions, with internally displaced learners' viewpoints tilting more toward positive or negative views or perceptions. In the other sense, respondents are more likely to be homogenous in their perceptions of the study indicators (table 1).

Data management and analysis

Quantitative data was entered using EpiData Version 3.1 (EpiData Association, Odense Denmark, 2008) and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Standard version, Release 21.0 (IBM Inc. 2012). These structured questions were analyzed using frequency, proportions and multiple-responses analysis to aggregate score within conceptual component (IBM Inc. 2012, Nana, 2018). Statistics were presented in tables and charts. Hypothesis was tested using Binary Logistic Regression.

Findings

Demographic characteristics

Sex

The sample was well stratified between male and female though the female were more than the male with proportion of 62.8% (174) and 37.2% (103) for the male and the female respectively.

Home type

Internally displaced students live mostly under both parents though quite below majority 37.2% (103), followed by those from single-parent home 32.9% (91), those from separated parents 17.3% (48), then those from broken home 12.6% (35).

Educational level

Internal displaced students were mostly from secondary school 82.3% (228), while 17.7% (49) were from high school 17.7% (49).

Age

Their mode age was 18 to 21 years with proportion of 38.6% (107), almost the same with the 38.3% (106) for those aged 14 to 17 years. Those aged 22-40 years were least represented with a proportion of 23.1% (64).

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of IDSHSLs

Sex	n	%
Male	103	37.2
Female	174	62.8
Home type	n	%
Broken home	35	12.6
Single parent	91	32.9
Under both parents	103	37.2
Separated parents (by death or divorce)	48	17.3
Educational level	n	%
Primary	49	17.7
Secondary	228	82.3
Age	n	%
14-17	106	38.3
18-21	107	38.6
22-40	64	23.1

The impact of problem-focused coping strategy on the coping ability of internally displaced secondary and high school learners in Yaounde municipality

Problem-focused coping

Internally displaced students in a weak majority weight (62.0%) acknowledged the employment of problem-focused strategy to cope with life.

Table 3: IDSHSLs' description of their problem-focused coping strategy

Items	Stretched				Collapsed		Mean	SD
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree and agree	Disagree and strongly disagree		
I have been concentrating my efforts on doing something about the situation I am in.	27.1% (75)	39.4% (109)	27.4% (76)	6.1% (17)	66.4% (184)	33.6% (93)	2.9	0.9
I have been taking action to try to make the situation better	21.3% (59)	42.6% (118)	27.8% (77)	8.3% (23)	63.9% (177)	36.1% (100)	2.8	0.9
I have been getting help and advice from other people	20.2% (56)	41.5% (115)	28.9% (80)	9.4% (26)	61.7% (171)	38.3% (106)	2.7	0.9
I have been trying to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.	22.7% (63)	40.1% (111)	27.8% (77)	9.4% (26)	62.8% (174)	37.2% (103)	2.8	0.9

I have been trying to come up with a strategy about what to do.	21.3% (59)	40.4% (112)	27.4% (76)	10.8% (30)	61.7% (171)	38.3% (106)	2.7	0.9
I have been looking for something good in what is happening.	24.5% (68)	33.6% (93)	30.3% (84)	11.6% (32)	58.1% (161)	41.9% (116)	2.7	1.0
I have been trying to get advice or help from other people about what to do.	27.1% (75)	29.2% (81)	32.5% (90)	11.2% (31)	56.3% (156)	43.7% (121)	2.7	1.0
I have been thinking hard about what steps to take	23.5% (65)	41.9% (116)	27.8% (77)	6.9% (19)	65.3% (181)	34.7% (96)	2.8	0.9
MRS	23.5% (520)	38.6% (855)	28.7% (637)	9.2% (204)	62.0% (1375)	38.0% (841)	2.8	0.9

They mostly concentrated their efforts on doing something about the situation they are in 66.4% (184), followed by thinking hard about what steps to take 65.3% (181), taking action to try to make the situation better 63.9% (177), trying to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive 62.8% (174), getting help and advice from other people 61.7% (171), having the same proportion with trying to come up with a strategy about what to do, looking for something good in what is happening 58.1% (161), then trying to get advice or help from other people about what to do 53.6% (156), table 3.

Challenges faced by IDPs

Internally displaced students below majority weight (42.1%) agreed to face challenges.

They mostly worried about the situations in which they might panic and make a fool of themselves 46.2% (128), having the same proportion with those that find it difficult to relax, then comes those that find it difficult to work up the initiative to do things 44.4% (123), those that tended to over-react to situations 44.0% (122), those that are unable to become enthusiastic about anything 40.1% (111), those that felt that they had nothing to look forward to 39.7% (110), those that feel that life was meaningless 38.6% (107), then those that couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all 37.9% (105), table 4.

Table 4: IDSHSLs' description of challenges they face in coping with life

Items	Stretched				Collapsed		Mean	SD
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree and agree	Disagree and strongly disagree		
I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things	16.6% (46)	27.4% (76)	37.9% (105)	18.1% (50)	44.4% (123)	55.6% (154)	2.4	1.0
I tended to over-react to situations	15.9% (44)	30.3% (84)	40.4% (112)	13.4% (37)	44.0% (122)	56.0% (155)	2.4	1.0
I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself	13.0% (36)	26.7% (74)	42.2% (117)	18.1% (50)	46.2% (128)	53.8% (149)	2.5	0.9
I felt that I had nothing to look forward to	9.4% (26)	29.2% (81)	42.6% (118)	18.8% (52)	39.7% (110)	60.3% (167)	2.3	0.9
I felt that life was meaningless	14.1% (39)	26.0% (72)	40.1% (111)	19.9% (55)	38.6% (107)	61.4% (170)	2.3	0.9
I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything	18.8% (52)	27.4% (76)	38.6% (107)	15.2% (42)	40.1% (111)	59.9% (166)	2.3	1.0
I found it difficult to relax	11.6% (32)	26.4% (73)	43.3% (120)	18.8% (52)	46.2% (128)	53.8% (149)	2.5	1.0
I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all	14.8% (41)	29.6% (82)	37.2% (103)	18.4% (51)	37.9% (105)	62.1% (172)	2.3	0.9
MRS	14.3% (316)	27.9% (618)	40.3% (893)	17.6% (389)	42.1% (934)	57.9% (1282)	2.4	0.9

Research Hypothesis: Problem-focused coping has no significant effect on the coping ability of IDSHSLs in Yaounde municipality

Based on Binary Logistic Regression, there was a significant impact of problem-focused coping strategy on the coping ability of internally displaced students ($P = 0.000$). The hypothesis here stated is then rejected. This implies that the more IDP students apply problem-focused strategy, the higher the likelihood for them to overcome their challenges. The overall explanatory power (Cox & Snell R Square) for the conceptual component 'problem-focused coping' was 22.7%.

One indicator surfaced as critical predictor of coping ability ($P < 0.05$, $OR > 1$, and LB of $OR > 1$), that is 'I have been getting help and advice from other people' (table 5).

Table 5: Binary Logistic Regression depicting significant predictive indicators of the conceptual component 'problem-focused coping' controlled for each other considering the dependent conceptual component 'coping with challenges'

Predictors	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (B)	95% C. I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
I have been concentrating my efforts on doing something about the situation I am in.	.298	.240	1.546	1	.214	1.348	.842	2.157
I have been taking action to try to make the situation better	.004	.219	.000	1	.984	1.004	.654	1.543
I have been getting help and advice from other people	.500	.207	5.855	1	.016	1.649	1.100	2.471
I have been trying to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.	.204	.201	1.023	1	.312	1.226	.826	1.819
I have been trying to come up with a strategy about what to do.	.182	.204	.800	1	.371	1.200	.805	1.788
I have been looking for something good in what is happening.	.282	.174	2.633	1	.105	1.326	.943	1.865
I have been trying to get advice or help from other people about what to do.	.039	.173	.052	1	.819	1.040	.742	1.459
I have been thinking hard about what steps to take	.173	.215	.642	1	.423	1.188	.779	1.812

Discussion

Internally displaced secondary school learners acknowledged the employment of problem-focused strategy to cope with life. They mostly concentrate their efforts on doing something about the situation they are in, followed by thinking hard about what steps to take which are termed re-appraisal of the uncertainties of situation by Chong et al. (2022). Problem-focused mechanisms were also highlighted by Diponegoro et al. (2020) as helpful when faced with tangible life challenges. Nginyu (2023) also found that, faced with challenges such as basic financial needs, food security, habitation or health, the adaptation strategies employed by IDPs to cope were problem-focused oriented. IDSHSLs were taking action at their own level to try to make the situation better, which fall in the frame of active coping mechanisms earlier described by Chong et al. (2022), and termed task-oriented decision-making style by Maghan (2017). Other problem-focused strategies in this context involved getting help and advice from other people, having the same proportion

with trying to come up with a strategy about what to do, then trying to get advice or help from other people about what to do. Okpan & Ezeah (2020) emphasized the need to focus on sustainable economic empowerment programs such as skill acquisition and education. Skills or capacity building as a sustainable coping mechanism equally surfaced in this study as IDSHSLs take number of self-oriented initiatives to cope with their studies. IDSHSLs equally adjusted their behavior by trying to see it in a different light and to make it seem more positive. Chong et al. (2022) equally highlighted behavioral strategies as ways of coping employed by IDPs. Looking for something good in what is happening was an example of the strategy termed regulation of emotion with coping reserve by Chong et al. (2022). With respect to the challenges, internally displaced secondary school learners highlighted number of them. They mostly worried about the situations in which they might panic and make a fool of themselves, having the same proportion with those that find it difficult to relax, then comes those that find it difficult to work

up the initiative to do things, those that tended to over-react to situations, those that are unable to become enthusiastic about anything, those that felt that they had nothing to look forward to, those that feel that life was meaningless, then those that couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all. By highlighting psychological challenges, this study aligns with Chong et al. (2022) who reported psychological challenges as the main ones experienced by IDPs, which Ryan (2013) classified as stress factors and satisfaction with life. Under stress factors as termed by Ryan (2013), we can classified those mostly worried about the situations in which they might panic and make a fool of themselves, having the same proportion with those that find it difficult to relax, then comes those that find it difficult to work up the initiative to do things, those that tended to over-react to situations. Under satisfaction-with-life factors as termed by Ryan (2013), we had those that are unable to become enthusiastic about anything, those that felt that they had nothing to look forward to, those that feel that life was meaningless, then those that couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all. The findings unfold a significant impact of problem-focused coping strategy on the coping ability of internally displaced students, thus aligning with the results of Purnawat Adiatmika & Lesmana (2021) who found that self-efficacy score was significantly higher in their intervention group, which was those subjected to problem-focused strategy, as well as a decrease in psychological distress. Shimazu, Umanodan & Schaufeli (2006) concluded that problem-focused coping stress management program is one of the most effective methods for coping with academic stress.

Conclusion

There is urgent need to develop early preventive and intervention strategies to address the socio-economic and cultural challenges faced by IDSHSLs. Problem-focused was a highly employed strategy, which rimes with the trend of literature whereby problem-focused coping as stress management strategy is highlighted as one of the most effective methods for coping with academic stress. It was proven that problem-focused strategy was more suitable when faced with tangible problems such as feeding, health, lodging, education among others. Inappropriate coping strategy like alcohol consumption or substance abuse in a nutshell was employed by IDSHSLs, which paradoxically were proven not to relieve them from their challenges, thus instead surfacing as critical setback. Such problem could be magnified by sustained low-life satisfaction. Education of displaced children should be given more concerted effort with the host government as main actor, NGOs, humanitarian

organization and philanthropists. This is so important because the children are at the heritage of the future and investing in their education both moral and professional is vital for a healthy, moral, ethical and peaceful society for today and tomorrow. In fact, as argued by Dina & Karishma (2021), the provision of quality education is of paramount importance to an adequate crisis response as we are building tomorrow leaders who are expected to do better in our prospect of a peaceful world. Education is essential for human capital formation, economic growth and self-sufficiency, and peace building and reconstruction. Providing equal access to quality education today is critical to reducing inequality in opportunity in the future if our vision for a sustainable Africa should be achieved. Concerted efforts to promote peace and security is paramount in the present Africa context faced with multiple national and cross-border active and latent conflicts.

Recommendations

Sufficient attention should be paid to the education of IDHSLs, and make them understand that substance abuse such as alcohol consumption will only act as setback to their personal development in all aspects with negative repercussion to their family, their community, their country and the world at large.

As for the leaders or governance system particularly and at different levels, concerted efforts should be enhanced to end existing conflicts and prevent future ones.

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