

# **INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS AND HOPELESSNESS ON QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON**

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## **Abstract**

*This study investigated the influence of emotional distress and hopelessness on quality of life among internally displaced person in Agan Camp in Makurdi Local Government of Benue State. The recent farmers-herdsmen clashes across villages in Nigeria has called for this study while examining the quality of life of people who have been left homeless and forced to take shelter in internally displaced person camps. A survey research design was utilized for the study. Purposeful and simple random sampling technique was used to sample internally displaced persons in Agan camp and 200 internally displaced persons comprising of 104 (52.0%) males and 96 (48.0%) females respectively. The Quality of Life Scale, Beck Hopelessness Scale and Robertson Emotional Distress Scale were used for data collection. Three hypotheses were tested using multiple regression. It was found among others that emotional distress had a significant positive influence on quality of life among internally displaced persons in Agan camp. The result also showed a significant positive influence of hopelessness on quality of life among internally displaced persons in Agan camp and a significant joint influence of emotional distress and hopelessness on quality of life among internally displaced persons in Agan camp in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. Based on the study findings, recommendations were made.*

**Keywords:** Emotional Distress, Hopelessness and Quality of Life.

## Introduction

Quality of life is an amorphous concept, an umbrella term that means different things to different people. This indicates that a multidimensional approach of quality of life is required (Bowling & Gabriel, 2007). The definition of quality of life benefits from efforts to understand and relate to the idea of cultural contexts, social and environmental and local value systems. One of the most popular definitions of quality of life is provided by Cummins, McCabe, Rome, Reid and Waters (1997) that describes quality of life as follows: "quality of life is both objective and subjective, each axis being the aggregate of seven domains: material well-being, health, productivity, intimacy, safety, community and emotional wellbeing. Objective domains contain cultural relevant measurements of objective well-being. Subjective domains contain feelings of satisfaction regarding a domain evaluated in terms of their importance to the individual (Cummins et. at., 1997). Internally displaced persons are basically deprived of their private life, home, farms, belongings and even loss some of their relations which have a great impact on their psychological wellbeing. Most of the internally displaced persons that take refuge in government or private camps are prone to face a lot of difficulties ranging from insufficient food supply, lack of health facilities and social amenities that threaten their quality of life.

The living conditions and quality of life of internally displaced persons taking shelter in camps appear to be miserable as they usually tolerate constant hunger, suffer from malnourishment and homelessness which makes them vulnerable to health and psychologically related problems. This type of situations makes their life complex which in turn develops many psychological problems such as anxiety, emotional distress, alienation, and feeling of hopelessness as a result they become psychologically vulnerable as well. Every culture has different factors affecting quality of life and measures psychological, physical, social as well as economic well-being of the individuals. The general concept of quality of life was basically overlapping with the traditional concepts of health and functional status. An ideal health assessment, therefore, would include a measure of the person's physical health, a measure of physical, social and psychological functioning, and a measure of quality of life.

Emotional distress plays a crucial role in determining how people feel about their present quality life. Expressing of one's emotional state is normal but when these emotions increase in intensity, persist for more than a few weeks, and start to interfere with a person's life, it may be signal of emotional distress. Emotional distress can be defined as an unpleasant feeling or emotion that impact your level of functioning (Hunter & Schmidt, 2010). In other words, it is emotional discomfort that interferes with your activities of daily living. Emotional distress can result in negative views of the environment, others, and the self. Sadness, anxiety, distraction, and symptoms of mental illness are manifestations of emotional distress. Traumatic experiences, such as the death of a loved one, are causes of emotional distress. Emotional distress can be thought of as a maladaptive response to a stressful situation. Emotional distress occurs when external events or stressors place demands upon us that we are unable to cope with. For example, we may struggle to accept that a loved one is no longer with us. As a result, we become sad and have trouble getting out of bed, we are unable to focus at work, and we lose interest in social activities (Hunter & Schmidt, 2010).

Hopelessness is defined as one's tendency to possess a negative point of view or a set of negative expectations for the future (Perczel-Forintos, Sallai, & Rózsa 2010). Individuals

who have feelings of hopelessness are often characterized by possessing a negative view about the future and believe that nothing will turn out right for them, that they will never succeed at what they try to do, that their important goals can never be attained, and that their worst problems will never be solved. In addition to depression, several studies have suggested that hopelessness may play an important role in suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, completed suicide, low life satisfaction leading to poor quality of life (Kuo, Gallo & Eaton, 2004).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem faced by internally displaced people who have been victims of any disaster is really under researched because most of their emotional part of the situation is not taken into consideration but rather everything is focus on material things as it is experienced in other countries and Nigeria in particular. Apart from their emotional distress, the situation impacts their quality of life and threatens their future in life but researchers always prefer to focus only on their feeding aspect which doesn't really capture what they are going through internally and this is the most important aspect that needs to be investigated in order to proffer lasting solution to internally displaced persons. The internal aspect of the consequences of internally displaced persons can be very devastating but this cannot be known without carrying out research that will provide an empirical result which can be used to enhanced their standard and quality of life, hence is the reason why this research is designed to investigate the influence of emotional distress and hopelessness on quality of life among internally displaced person in Agan camp.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine influence of emotional distress and hopelessness on quality of life among internally displaced person. Therefore, the study aim at determining (1) the influence of emotional distress on quality of life among internally displaced person in Agan camp (2) the influence of hopelessness on quality of life among internally displaced person in Agan camp. (3) the joint influence of emotional distress and hopelessness on quality of life among internally displaced persons in Agan camp in Makurdi Local Government.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The design of the study is a cross sectional survey design. Survey design studies are mainly concerned with the gathering of information about variables from a representative sample of the population (Olaitan & Nwoke, 1998). This design is suitable for this study since the researcher intends to gather information about emotional distress, hopelessness and quality of life among internally displaced persons in Agan camp.

#### **Area of Study**

This research was conducted in Makurdi Local Government of Benue State. Makurdi the State capital of Benue State is located in the central part of Nigeria. Makurdi Local Government was chosen because of the presence of internally displaced person that are

accommodated in different camps around the Local Government. The study was carried out in Agan internally displaced person camp in Makurdi Local Government.

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## **Participants**

Participants for this study included 200 internally displaced persons selected in Agan Camp in Makurdi Local Government of Benue State. Their ages ranged from 18 to 75 years. Out of the total number, 104(52.0%) were male and 96(48.0%) were female. Also 110(55.0%) were married, 49(24.5%) were single, 28(14.0%) were separated and 13(6.5%) were divorced. As for their religion, all indicated been Christians.

## **Sampling**

A convenient sampling technique (non –probability sampling method) was used for the selection of the 200 subjects who are in Agan internal displaced person Camp in Makurdi Local Government of Benue state because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher in which they were requested to complete the questionnaire on voluntary basis. This sampling technique was used because subjects required for the study were conveniently accessible due to their proximity to the researcher.

## **Instrumentation**

This study made use of the following instruments: Quality of Life Scale, Beck Hopelessness Scale and Robertson Emotional Distress Scale

### **Quality of Life Scale**

To measure the quality of life of the participants, the Quality of Life Scale developed by American psychologist John Flanagan in 1970 was used. The scale consists of 16 items that form three subscales. Subscales, which determine different dimensions of quality of life are: material welfare and relating with others (7 items), health and working capacity (4 items), personal commitment, social and community (5 items). Each item has seven response options (1 =terrible, 7 =great). In the construction of the instrument, Flanagan did not report a coefficient of internal consistency, but one was calculated, after testing the first 240 subjects it was reported a Cronbach Alpha coefficient = 0.82 and test-retest reliability ( $r = 0.84$ ). Higher scores indicate a higher quality of life (Anderson & Burckhardt, 2003).

### **Beck Hopelessness Scale**

To measure hopelessness of the participants, Beck Hopelessness Scale developed by Beck in 1974 was used for the evaluation of hopelessness. The scale consists of 20 items with response using true or false. It has a concurrent validity of .74 and internal consistency of .93 respectively.

### **Robertson Emotional Distress Scale**

To measure emotional distress of the participants, Robertson Emotional Distress Scale developed by Robertson in 2005 was used to measure the level of emotional distress among people. The scale has 10 items with response using five likert-points. It has a validity of 0.74 and reliability of 0.89.

Copies of the questionnaire were given to willing participants among internally displaced person in Agan Camp in Makurdi Local Government of Benue state. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants and the confidentiality of their responses guaranteed. With the permission of the camp coordinator, educated displaced persons in the camp were identified and balloting was used to select 200 participants. Ballot papers with the inscription yes/no were rumped and dropped in a basket and all the identified educated persons in the camp were asked to pick one ballot from the basket. Displaced persons who picked ballots with yes on them formed part of the sample. The questionnaire was then administered on the selected displaced persons, the completed copies of the questionnaire were collected from them after 45 minutes of administration and respondents were debriefed in accordance with research ethics in psychology.

Data for this study were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. Multiple regression analysis was used to test for the independent and joint influence of emotional distress and hopelessness on quality of life.

## Results

**Table 1: Multiple regression analysis showing influence of Emotional Distress and Hopelessness on Quality of Life among Internally Displaced Person in Agan Camp Makurdi.**

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	df	F	β	t	Sig.
Constant	.737	.543	2,190	112.951		13.574	.000
Emotional Distress					.748	15.027	.000
Hopelessness					.145	2.915	.004

**Hypothesis one** states that emotional distress will have significant influence on quality of life among internally displaced persons in Agan camp in Makurdi. This hypothesis was tested using multiple regression and the result is presented in Table 1. The result presented in Table 1 revealed that emotional distress had a significant positive influence on quality of life among internally displaced persons in Agan camp in Makurdi [R=.737, R<sup>2</sup>=.543, F (2,190) =11.951, p<.05]. This result indicates that emotional distress accounted for 5.43% of the total variance observed in quality of life among internally displaced persons. The result further showed that emotional distress (β=.748) had a significant positive influence on quality of life. This means that the higher the level of emotional distress, the lower quality of life of internally displaced persons. Based on this result, hypothesis one was confirmed.

**Hypothesis two** states that hopelessness will have significant influence on quality of life among internally displaced persons in Agan camp in Makurdi. This hypothesis was tested using multiple regression and the result is presented in Table 1. The result presented in Table 1 revealed that hopelessness had a significant positive influence on quality of life among internally displaced persons in Agan camp in Makurdi [R=.737, R<sup>2</sup>=.543, F (2,190) =11.951, p<.05]. This result indicates that hopelessness accounted for 5.43% of the total variance observed in quality of life among internally displaced persons. The result further showed that hopelessness (β=.145) had a significant positive influence on quality of life. This

**Hypothesis three** states that emotional distress and hopelessness will have significant joint influence on quality of life among internally displaced persons in Agan camp in Makurdi. This hypothesis was tested using multiple regression and the result is presented in Table 1. The result presented in Table 1 revealed that emotional distress and hopelessness had a significant joint positive influence on quality of life among internally displaced persons in Agan camp in Makurdi [ $R=.737$ ,  $R^2=.543$ ,  $F(2,190)=11.951$ ,  $p<.05$ ]. This result indicates that emotional distress and hopelessness accounted for 5.43% of the total variance observed in quality of life among internally displaced persons. The result further showed that emotional distress ( $\beta=.748$ ) and hopelessness ( $\beta=.145$ ) had a significant joint positive influence on quality of life. This means that the higher the level of emotional distress and hopelessness, the lower quality of life of internally displaced persons. Based on this result, hypothesis three was confirmed.

### Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one which states that, emotional distress will have significant influence on quality of life among internally displaced persons in Agan camp in Makurdi was significant. This implies that the experience of emotional hurt, disturbance and distress has a significant role on the quality of life of internally displaced persons which can be triggered by the trauma they experienced during the crisis. This finding agrees with Anna, Elisabeth and Paula (2017) who analyzed the differences between young offenders and non-offenders in emotional distress, quality of life, aggressive behavior, anxiety and depression, and also the differences according to sex; and compared the relation between emotional instability and anxiety, depression and aggressive behavior mediated or modulated by anger in both groups. The result is also in line with Hsieh and Yung (2017) who examined the relationship between emotional regulation and inhibitory control in predicting aggressive behavior and quality of life.

Hypothesis two which states that, hopelessness will have significant influence on quality of life among internally displaced persons in Agan camp in Makurdi was significant. This implies that when internally displaced persons see no hope for a better future it has a significant role on their quality of life. This finding agrees with John (2002) who empirically measured the pervasiveness of hopelessness and uncertainty about the quality of life among inner-city adolescents and documents the link between hopelessness, uncertainty, and aggressive behavior. The result is also in line with Shahin (2012) who examined the relationship between hopelessness and quality of life in the students of Health School of Mashhad Medical Sciences University.

Hypothesis three stated that, emotional distress and hopelessness will have significant joint influence on quality of life among internally displaced persons in Agan camp in Makurdi. This hypothesis was tested using multiple regression and the result revealed that emotional distress and hopelessness had a significant joint positive influence on quality of life among internally displaced persons in Agan camp in Makurdi. This finding agrees with Shahin (2012) who examined the relationship between hopelessness and quality of life in the students of Health School of Mashhad Medical Sciences University. The result is also in

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The study investigated the influence of Emotional Distress and Hopelessness on Quality of Life among Internally Displaced Person in Agan Cam Makurdi. Three hypotheses were tested using multiple regressions and the result revealed that emotional distress and hopelessness independently and jointly influence quality of life among internally displaced person in Agan camp in Makurdi. Based on the research findings, it is concluded that emotional distress and hopelessness have great impact on the quality of life of internally displaced persons.

### Recommendations

Based on the research findings the following recommendations were made;

- i. Internally displaced persons should be giving behavioural emotional therapy to help them cope with their situation.
- ii. Internally displaced persons should be given hope by supporting them and also provided with the necessary assistance to help them build a feeling of hope.
- iii. Internally displaced persons should be provided with something doing that will enhance their emotional feelings.

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