NIGERIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Published by the Nigerian Psychological Association

RESILIENCE AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN BENUE STATE

James Ejeh
Elvis O. Ihaji
Anyalewa A. Ajonye

Authors' Affiliation

Benue State University, Makurdi
Correspondent author:
ladyajonye@gmail.com,
talk2ejeh49@gmail.com

Abstract

The role of maladaptive coping strategies in problems such as anxiety, sleep disturbances, alcohol addiction, mental health problems, poor performance has been well reported in the literature. Resilience has also shown to mitigate the effect of maladaptive coping among various populations. However, the influence of resilience on coping strategies among Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Benue State is not well understood. Therefore, the interest of the study was to investigate such influence given the stated sample. The study adopted the ex-post facto survey design in which 399 IDPs, comprising 156(39.1%) males and 243(60.9%) females, whose ages ranged from 18 – 69 (Mean age = 32.03, SD=15.34) served as participants. The Brief Resilience Scale and the Coping Scale were used in data collection, while data analysis involved the use of Simple Linear Regression. Findings showed that, resilience had a significant positive influence on coping strategies. Resilience also explained 41.5% of the variance observed in coping strategies among the IDPs. Results also indicated that, resilience had a significant positive influence on cognitive coping, while a significant negative influence of resilience was found on emotional coping and behavioural coping strategies. The study recommended that resilience training should be introduced in IDP camps, to facilitate adaptive coping among the Internally Displaced Persons.

Introduction

As people struggle to navigate through life amidst challenges, it becomes imperative for them to cope with the realities of the situations they find themselves, hence the role of coping strategies to optimal daily human functioning in this context becomes indispensable. Coping usually involves adjusting to, or tolerating negative events or realities while the individual tries to maintain positive self-image and emotional equilibrium (Kieft & Bendell, 2021). Coping occurs mostly in the context of life changes that are perceived to be stressful. Stress generally is usually associated with negative life changes, and all changes require some sort of coping and adaptation, even positive changes — such as getting married or having a child can be stressful and requires coping (Stallman, et al., 2022).

For Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), who have been forcibly displaced from their homes, and currently living in camps, this presents significant challenges and changes to their lives, as they try to adjust and cope with their current situation. In this light, it is plausible that, those who are able to adopt adaptive coping strategies will be likely to fare better physically, psychologically, socially and functionally than those who are unable to cope adaptively. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (2021), there are about 82.4 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, and 55 million out of this number are Internally Displaced Persons. In another breathe 48 million of the displacements results from conflict and violence, while 7 million is due to disasters (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, 2020).

Nigeria is not exempted from this situation, as violent conflict between herders and farmers are being witnessed in various parts of the country. In Benue State, over a decade-long violent conflict between pastoralist and the farming communities has led to the sacking of communities, loss of lives and property, as well as displacement of people from their ancestral homes, who are currently living in camps established by the Benue State Government. However, the patterns of coping among these IDPs is not well understood and it is based on this that this study examined coping strategies among IDPs living in camps in Benue State.

Furthermore, the study investigated the influence of resilience on coping strategies among IDPs in Benue State. Resilience is the ability to cope mentally or emotionally with a crisis or to return to pre-crisis status quickly (de Terte &Stephens, 2014). Resilience is said to exists when the person uses mental processes and behaviours in promoting personal assets and protecting self from the potential negative effects of stressors (Robertson, et al., 2015). In other words, resilience exists in people who develop psychological and behavioural capabilities that allow them to remain calm during crises/chaos and to move on from the incident without long-term negative consequences.

Evidence have shown that, there is a link between high scores on resilience and favourable coping strategies (De la Fuente Jesus, et al., 2021; Labrague, 2021; Sampogna, et al., 2021). However, the influence of resilience on coping strategies among IDPs is not well understood, hence this study sets to investigate this problem by examining the influence of resilience on coping strategies among IDPs in Benue State.

Statement of the Problem

As man constantly faces challenges of daily living, the need for coping strategies in navigating through such challenges becomes increasingly indispensable. However, there are chances that some people may not be able to cope adaptively, and this has been shown to have predisposing potentials for problems such as alcohol addiction, psychological health issues, sleep disturbances, anxiety, performance deficits and so on (Charlton & Wafford, 2022; Metzger, et al., 2017). Among IDPs living in camps, coping could be more challenging in view of the distortions in their life course. However, evidence shows that, high scores on resilience is associated with favourable coping strategies (De La Fuente Jesus, et al., 2021; Labrague, 2021; Sampogna et al., 2021). Resilience has also been established as a significant mediator variable in studies among various populations (Collazzoni et al., 2020; Lara-Cabrera, et al., 2021; Yirci, et al., 2022).

Unfortunately, the role of resilience on coping strategies among IDPs living in camps in Benue State is not well understood. Considering that, such understanding can generate information or knowledge that will be critical in enhancing favourable coping strategies, and therefore mitigate the dangers associated with destructive and unhealthy coping, this study intends to examine the influence of resilience on coping strategies among IDPs in Benue State.

Literature Review

Coping Strategies

Generally, coping relates to conscious strategies used to reduce unpleasant emotions. Coping strategies can be in the form of cognitions or behaviours and can be individual or social. There are various types of coping strategies, which include: Appraisal-Focused Coping, Problem-Focused Coping, and Emotion-Focused Coping. Appraisal-focused coping occur when the person modifies the way they think, for example: employing denial, or distancing oneself from the problem. Individuals who use appraisal coping strategies purposely alter their perspective on their situation in order to have a more positive outlook on their situation (Greenberg, 2015). Problem-focused coping strategy is characterised by the facets of active coping, use of informational support, planning, and positive reframing (Kieft & Bendell, 2021). Individuals that are more oriented toward this dimension indicates a tendency aimed at changing the stressful situation, psychological strength, grit, a practical approach to problem solving and is predictive of positive outcomes (Folkman & Lazarus, 2006).

Emotion-focused coping can be characterised by the facets of venting, use of emotional support, humour, acceptance, self-blame, and religion (Stallman, et al., 2022). Individuals with high scores on this dimension indicates coping strategies that are aimed to regulate emotions associated with the stressful situation (Stallman, et al., 2021b). Evidence suggests that, maladaptive coping styles are linked to negative outcomes such as alcohol addiction, anxiety, sleep disturbances, poor academic performance, mental health problems and so on (Charlton & Wafford, 2022; Metzger, et al., 2017). However, coping strategies among internally displaced persons in Benue State is not well understood, hence this study examined coping strategies among IDPs living in camps in Benue State.

Resilience

Resilience is generally thought of as a "positive adaptation" after a stressful or adverse situation (Hopf, 2010). When a person is bombarded by daily stress, it disrupts their internal and external sense of balance, presenting challenges as well as opportunities. However, the routine stressors of daily life can have positive impacts which promote resilience. It is still unknown what the correct level of stress is for each individual. Some people can handle greater amounts of stress than others. A portion of psychologists believe that it is not the stress itself that promotes resilience but rather the individual's perception of their stress and their perceived personal level of control (McGonigal, 2016). The presence of stress allows people to practice this process. Some schools of taught contend that, stress is experienced in an individual's life course at times of difficult life transitions, involving developmental and social change; traumatic life events, including grief and loss; and environmental pressures, encompassing poverty and community violence (Zautra, et al., 2010).

Resilience is the integrated adaptation of physical, mental and spiritual aspects in a set of "good or bad" circumstances, a coherent sense of self that is able to maintain normative developmental tasks that occur at various stages of life (Ray, 2020). It is important to note that resilience is not only about overcoming a deeply stressful situation, but also coming out of the said situation with "competent functioning". Resiliency allows a person to rebound from adversity as a strengthened and more resourceful person (Kamalpour, et al., 2020). Some characteristics of psychological resilience include: an easy temperament, good self-esteem, planning skills, and a supportive environment inside and outside of the family (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013).Aaron Antonovsky in 1979 stated that when an event is appraised as comprehensible (predictable), manageable (controllable), and somehow meaningful (explainable) a resilient response is more likely (Theron & Rensburg, 2018).

Resilience is most commonly understood as a process. It is a tool a person can use and it is something that an individual develops overtime. Others assume it to be a trait of the individual, an idea more typically referred to as "resiliency" (Ray, 2020). Most research now shows that resilience is the result of individuals being able to interact with their environments and participate in processes that either promote well-being or protect them against the overwhelming influence of risk factors (Zautra, et al., 2010).

This research could be used in support of psychological resilience being a process rather than a trait. Resilience is seen as something to develop. Making it something to pursue and not an endpoint Ray Williams (Canadian businessman and author) saw that resilience comes from people able to effectively cope

with their environment. He believed that there are three basic ways individuals could react when faced with a difficult situation (Ray, 2020): Respond with anger or aggression; Become overwhelmed and shut down; Feel the emotion about the situation and appropriately handle the emotion.

The third option is the one he believed that truly helps an individual promote wellness. Individuals that follow this pattern are people who show resilience. Their resilience comes from coping with the situation. People who follow the first and second option tend to label themselves as victims of their circumstance or they may blame others for their misfortune. They do not effectively cope with their environment, they become reactive, and they tend to cling to negative emotions. This often makes it difficult to focus on problem solving or bounce back. Those that are more resilient will respond to their conditions by coping, bouncing back, and looking for a solution.

Theoretical Review
Coping Circumflex Model (CCM) (Schwarzer & Schwarzer, 1996)
The Coping Circumflex Model (CCM) is designed to integrate various coping distinctions, drawing inspiration from the tradition of circumflex models in psychology. The model is based on the assumption that individuals in stressful situations face two tasks: they need to solve the problem and regulate their emotions, which are reflected in two corresponding dimensions, that is, the problem coping dimension and emotion coping dimension. Problem coping and emotion coping are interpreted as bipolar dimensions.

Importantly, these dimensions define a space for other coping categories. The model contains a total of eight coping styles forming a circumflex: positive emotional coping, efficiency, problem solving, preoccupation with the problem, negative emotional coping, helplessness, problem avoidance, and hedonic disengagement. Schwarzer and Schwarzer (1996), p. 107) noted that "Coping with an adversity includes innumerous ways of dealing with diverse person-environment transactions. Thus, coping does not represent a homogeneous concept. Instead, it is a diffuse umbrella term." This line of reasoning is reflected in the Coping Circumflex Model (CCM), which is based on the concept of bipolar problem coping and emotion coping dimensions as well as on the idea of a circular continuum of coping styles.

In relating this theory to the situation of IDPs, the theory simply hypothesises that, those who are better able to adopt adaptive emotion regulating measures while facing adverse situations, are likely to be better able to focus and isolate the details of the stressor, with a view to overcoming it, or at least devising measures to mitigate its effects. On the other hand, the theory relates that, IDPs, who adopt maladaptive emotion regulation styles during adversity, will be more likely to focus on the problem, and hence will be more likely to live with it, mostly in a ruminating manner, which may be unhealthy for the person.

Method
The study employed the ex-post facto survey design in collecting data from the respondents. Setting comprised six (6) local government areas in Benue State where IDP camps are located. The local government areas include: Agatu, Guma, Gwer-west, Kwande, Logo, and Makurdi Local Government Areas. Participants were made up of 399 IDPs who were 18 years and above and were drawn from the population of 211,560 IDPs from 6 Local Government Areas affected by the crises using an online sample size calculator at: https://www.calculator.net/sample-size-calculator.html?type=1&cl=95&ci=5&pp=50&ps=211560&x=32&y=17. The online sample size calculator uses the formula:

$$\frac{n}{\frac{z^2 \times p(1-p)}{e^2 N}}$$

Where:
z = the z score
e = margin of error
N = population size
p = population proportion

Computation: $\dfrac{211,560}{1+1.96 \times 0.5}$

$$= \frac{\overline{0.0025 \times 211{,}560}}{529}$$

$$= \frac{211{,}560}{529}$$

= 399 Sample size

Further, proportional statistics based on Halleck's (2001) formula for proportional distribution was used in determining the number of questionnaires to be assigned to each of the IDP camps the formula proceeds as follows:

$$\left(\frac{n}{N}\right) Ni$$

n	=	Population Size Per Stratum
N	=	Total Population
Ni	=	Determined Sample Size

Continuing, the study utilised the census method in selecting the participating local government areas, while random sampling technique was used in selecting three (3) camps from which participants were chosen through purposive sampling method.

Instruments

A questionnaire comprising a demographic section and two standardized instruments were used in data collection. The instruments include: The Brief Resilience Scale, and the Coping Scale. All the scales had adequate Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients, and were also valid.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation were used in analyzing the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Further, inferential statistics such as simple linear regression was used in testing the hypotheses.

Results

Descriptive Characteristics of the Respondents

Findings revealed that, participants involved 399 IDPs comprising 156(39.1%) males and 243(60.9%) females, whose ages ranged from 18-69, (Mean Age = 32.02, SD=15.340). Of this number, 110(27.6%) had no formal education, 103(25.8%) had primary education, 141(35.3%) had post-primary education, while 45(11.3%) had tertiary education. Furthermore, 200(50.1%) were married, 139(34.8%) were single, 22(5.5%) were divorced, 25(6.3%) were widowed, and 13(3.3%) were separated.

Table 1: **Summary of Simple Linear Regression showing influence of Resilience on Coping Strategies**

DV	Predictors	R	R²	df	F	P	β	t	p
Coping Strategies	Constant	.644	.415	1.398	23.901	.000		14.534	.000
	Resilience						517	10.130	.000
Cognitive Coping	Constant	.548	.300	5,398	4.612	.000		13.291	.000
	Resilience						.387	4.978	.000
Emotional Coping	Constant	-.433	.187	1,398	7.793	.000		12.301	.000
	Resilience						-.355	-4.741	.000
Behavioural Coping	Constant	-.469	.219	1,398	5.383	.000		20.758	.000
	Resilience						-.174	-9.621	.000

The result of Simple Linear Regression in Table 1 show that, resilience had a significant influence on overall coping strategies among IDPs in Benue State [R=.644, R²=.415, F(1,398)=23.901, p<.01]. This means that, high scores on resilience will lead to a corresponding high scores on overall coping strategies among the

IDPs. Findings further indicated that resilience explained 41.5% of the variance observed in coping strategies among the IDPs. This indicates that, IDPs with high scores on resilience have 41.5% likelihood of experiencing high levels in overall coping strategies.

Furthermore, results on the influence of resilience on the dimensions of coping strategies indicate that, resilience significantly influenced cognitive coping among the IDPs [R=.548, R^2=.300, F(1,398)=4.612, p<.01]. The finding also shows that, resilience accounted for 30.0% of the total variance observed in cognitive coping among the IDPs. This means that, IDPs with high resilience scores are likely to also have high levels of cognitive coping strategies.

Continuing, the result found that, there was a significant negative influence of resilience on emotional coping among the IDPs [R=-.433, R^2=.187, F(1,398)=7.793, p<.01]. This means that, high resilience scores is likely to lead to low scores on emotional coping among the IDPs. Also, the finding indicated that, resilience explained 18.7% of the variance in emotional coping among the participants. This suggests that, IDPs with high resilience scores have 18.7% likelihood of experiencing low scores on emotional coping strategies.

Findings also indicated that, resilience had a significant negative influence on behavioural coping strategies among the IDPs [R=-.469, R^2=.219, F(1,398)=5.383, p<.01]. This means that, IDPs with high resilience scores are likely to experience low behavioural coping strategies. The result also indicated that, resilience explained 21.9% of the total variance observed in behavioural coping strategies among the IDPs. This suggests that, high resilience scores will lead to low behavioural coping strategies among IDPs in Benue State.

Discussion
This study investigated the influence of resilience on coping strategies among the IDPs. Findings showed that, resilience had a significant positive influence on coping strategies overall, and explained 41.5% of the variance observed in coping strategies among the IDPs. This suggests that, IDPs with high resilience scores have a 41.5% likelihood of also experiencing high or adaptive coping strategies.

In terms of its dimensions, findings show that, resilience had a significant positive influence on cognitive coping. This means that, IDPs with high resilience scores are likely to also show high levels of cognitive coping. It was also found that resilience explained 30.0% of the variance observed in cognitive coping among the IDPs. This means that, IDPs with high scores on resilience have a 30% likelihood of adopting cognitive coping strategies.

Other results indicated that, resilience had a significant negative influence on emotional coping, and resilience explained 18.7% of the variance observed in emotional coping among the IDPs. This entails that, IDPs with high scores on resilience have 18.7% likelihood of experiencing emotional coping strategies. Similarly, findings show that, resilience had a significant negative influence on behavioural coping among the IDPs, and accounted for 21.9% of the variance observed in behavioural coping among the IDPs. This means that, IDPs with high scores on resilience are likely to experience low scores on behavioural coping, and the extent of the impact is 21.9%.

Looking at these findings in the context of the Coping Circumplex Model (Schwarzer & Schwarzer, 1996), which is the theoretical framework of this study, the theory posits that, IDPs who are able to employ adaptive emotion regulating strategies while facing adversity, will be more likely to remain focused and sort out the stressors, with the aim of providing solutions to mitigate the effects of the adversity. On the flip side, the Coping Circumplex Model (Schwarzer and Schwarzer, 1996) contends that, IDPs with maladaptive emotion regulation strategies, are more likely to focus on the problem during adversity, and as a result continue to live with it, which is likely to pose negative consequences on such individuals.
This finding hold implications, as it has established resilience as a potent influencer of coping strategies among IDPs in Benue State. The study has also identified the influence of resilience on the various dimensions of coping strategies examined in this study. This has positive potential for channeling interventions aimed at enhancing coping strategies among IDPs in Benue State.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is the conclusion of this study that, resilience is a significant influencer of coping strategies and its dimensions of cognitive coping, emotional coping, and behavioural coping among IDPs in Benue State. These findings hold implications for psychological intervention aimed at enhancing coping strategies among internally displaced persons in Benue State and elsewhere.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are advanced to enhance coping strategies among IDPs in Benue State.

(i) Overall, the management of IDP camps should introduce resilience training in the camps in Benue State to help the IDPs build the requisite resilience to cope adaptively with the adverse situation they are facing.

(ii) In specific terms, a great deal of resilience training should be targeted at IDPs with high scores on emotional coping and behavioural coping strategies. This is important considering that the percentage variance explained by resilience among these categories of IDPs is generally small. For instance, 18.7% variance for emotional copers, and 21.9% for behavioural copers.

References

Abraham, R., Lien, L., & Hanssen, I. (2018). Coping, resilience and posttraumatic growth among Eritrean female refugees living in Norwegian asylum reception centres: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry,* 64 (4), 359 – 366.

Charlton, A.C., & Wafford, L.G. (2022). Maladaptive coping behaviours in pre-licensure nursing students: An integrative review. *Journal of Professional Nursing, 39*, 156 – 164. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2022.01.011.

Collazzoni, A., Stratta, P., Pacitti, F., Rossi, A., Santarelli, V., Bustini, M., Talevi, D., Socci, V., & Rossi, R. (2020). Resilience as a Mediator Between Interpersonal Risk Factors and Hopelessness in Depression. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, *11*, 10. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2020.00010.

De la Fuente Jesus, S.F., Garzon-Umerenkova, A., Salvator, F., Solinas, G., & Pignata, S. (2021). Cross-sectional study of resilience, positivity and coping strategies as predictors of engagement-burnout in undergraduate students: implications for prevention and treatment in mental well-being. *Frontiers in Psychiatry,* 12, 1 – 16. DOI=10.3389/fpsyt.2021.596453.

de Terte, I., & Stephens, C. (2014). Psychological Resilience of Workers in High-Risk Occupations. *Stress and Health*, 30 (5), 353 – 355.

Dudek, K.A., Kaufmann, F.N., Lavoie, O., & Menard, C. (2020). Central and peripheral stress-induced epigenetic mechanisms of resilience. *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*, 34 (1), 1–9.

Fletcher, D., & Sarkar, M. (2013). Psychological Resilience. *European Psychologist,* 18 (1), 12 – 23.

Folkman, R.S., & Lazarus, S. (2006). *Stress, appraisal, and coping ([Nachdr.] ed.)*. New York: Springer.

Greenberg, L. (2015). *Emotion-focused Therapy: Coaching clients to work through their feelings*. American Psychological Association.

Hopf, S.M. (2010). *Risk and Resilience in Children Coping with Parental Divorce*. Dartmouth Undergraduate Journal of Science.

Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) (2022). *Global report on internal displacement 2020.* https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/

Kamalpour, M., Watson, J., & Buys, L. (2020). How can online communities support resilience factors among older adults? *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction,* 36 (14), 1342–1353.

Kieft, J., & Bendell, J. (2021). The responsibility of communicating difficult truths about climate influenced societal disruption and collapse: an introduction to psychological research. *Institute for Leadership and Sustainability Occasional Papers,* **7**, 1 – 39.

Labrague L. J. (2021). Psychological resilience, coping behaviours and social support among health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review of quantitative studies. *Journal of nursing management*, *29*(7), 1893–1905. https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.13336.

Lara-Cabrera, M. L., Betancort, M., Muñoz-Rubilar, C. A., Rodríguez Novo, N., & De Las Cuevas, C. (2021). The Mediating Role of Resilience in the Relationship between Perceived Stress and Mental Health. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(18), 9762. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18189762.

McGonigal, K. (2016). *The Upside of Stress: Why Stress Is Good for You, and How to Get Good at It*. Penguin.

Metzger, I. W., Blevins, C., Calhoun, C. D., Ritchwood, T. D., Gilmore, A. K., Stewart, R., & Bountress, K. E. (2017). An examination of the impact of maladaptive coping on the association between stressor type and alcohol use in college. *Journal of American College Health,65*(8), 534–541. https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2017.1351445.

Robertson, I.T., Cooper, C.L., Sarkar, M., & Curran, T. (2015). Resilience training in the workplace from 2003 to 2014: A systematic review (PDF). *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology,* 88 (3), 533–562.

Sampogna, G., Del Vecchio, V., Giallonardo, V., Luciano, M., Albert, U., Carmassi, C., Carrà, G., Cirulli, F., Dell'Osso, B., Menculini, G., Nanni, M., Pompili, M., Sani, G., Volpe, U., Bianchini, V., & Fiorillo, A. (2021). What Is the Role of Resilience and Coping Strategies on the Mental Health of the General Population during the COVID-19 Pandemic? Results from the Italian Multicentric COMET Study. *Brain sciences*, *11*(9), 1231. https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci11091231.

Stallman, H.M., Beaudequin, D., Hermens, D.F., & Eisenberg, D. (2021b). Modelling the relationship between healthy and unhealthy coping strategies to understand overwhelming distress: A Bayesian network approach. *Journal of Affective Disorders Reports,* 3, 100054. doi:10.1016/j.jadr.2020.100054.

Stallman, H.M., Lipson, S.K., Zhou, S., & Eisenberg, D. (2022). How do university students cope? An exploration of the health theory of coping in a US sample. *Journal of American College Health, 70* (4), 1179 – 1185.

Theron, L., & van Rensburg, A. (2018). Resilience over time: Learning from school-attending adolescents living in conditions of structural inequality. *Journal of Adolescence,* 67, 167–178.

United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) (2021). *Figures at a Glance. 18 June 2021*. https://www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html.

Yirci, R., Atalmis, E.H., & Kirisci, G. (2022). Analyzing the mediating effect of psychological resilience on the relationship between COVID-19 fear and happiness. *Educational Process: International Journal, 11*(2), 147-166. https://dx.doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2022.112.8.

Zautra, A.J., Hall, J.S. & Murray, K.E. (2010). Resilience: A new definition of health for people and communities in J.W. Reich, A.J. Zautra & J.S. Hall (eds.), *Handbook of adult resilience*. New York: Guilford.