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Adaptability Challenges of Students Resettled in New Shelters in Post-Boko Haram Attacks on Educational Facilities in Gulani Local Government Area, Yobe State, Nigeria

Ahmed Mohammed[1]*, Suleiman Adamu[1], Nafiu Maigari[1] Hauwa Mohammed Chellumi[1], Ibrahim Usman Borko[1]

[1]Department of Science Education, Yobe State University, Damaturu-Nigeria

Corresponding author

Abstract: This study investigated the adaptability challenges of students resettled in new shelters following Boko Haram attacks on educational facilities in Gulani Local Government Area, Yobe State, Nigeria. Anchored on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, the study adopted a descriptive survey design guided by two objectives: to examine the adaptability challenges experienced by resettled students, and to determine the psychological effects of displacement on their learning. From a population of 500 resettled students, a sample of 150 was selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a validated structured instrument, the Adaptability Challenges of Resettled Students Questionnaire (ACRSQ), and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores. Findings showed that resettled students experienced considerable adaptability challenges, particularly fear and insecurity, difficulty adjusting to new schools, separation from family, and emotional stress (grand mean = 3.37). Displacement also had significant psychological effects, including fear of future attacks, poor concentration, anxiety, and depression (grand mean = 3.36). The study concludes that resettled students require sustained psychosocial and academic support to adapt successfully, and recommends the provision of adequate educational facilities, trauma-informed teacher training, professional counselling services, and continued humanitarian assistance in resettlement communities.

Keywords: adaptability, Boko Haram insurgency, displaced students, resettlement, psychosocial well-being, Yobe State

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental human right and a vital instrument for national development, equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values required for personal growth and meaningful participation in society. In Nigeria, access to quality education has been significantly undermined by the insurgency waged by the extremist group commonly known as Boko Haram, particularly in the North-East region. The insurgency has led to the destruction of schools, the displacement of students and teachers, and the closure of numerous educational institutions across Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa States. In response, many displaced students have been resettled in new shelters or temporary learning centres established by government agencies, humanitarian organizations, and host communities.

While these interventions have restored access to education for many learners, resettled students continue to face adaptability challenges that affect both their academic performance and psychosocial well-being. Adaptability refers to the ability of individuals to

Corresponding author: ahmadkhairunnass@gmail.com

adjust successfully to changes in their environment; for displaced students, it involves adjusting to new schools, teachers, classmates, and living conditions, often while contending with traumatic experiences, loss, poverty, and inadequate educational facilities in resettlement areas.

Gulani Local Government Area of Yobe State is among the communities most affected by the insurgency, with several educational facilities disrupted and many students relocated to safer communities and temporary shelters. Although learning has resumed for these students, many continue to experience social, emotional, psychological, and academic difficulties while adapting to their new environment. Despite various government and humanitarian interventions, limited research has focused specifically on the adaptability challenges experienced by resettled students within Gulani Local Government Area, and understanding these challenges is essential for developing effective educational and psychosocial support programmes. This study therefore investigated the adaptability challenges of students resettled in new shelters after Boko Haram attacks on educational facilities in Gulani Local Government Area.

Objectives of the Study

1. Examine the adaptability challenges experienced by resettled students,
2. Determine the psychological and emotional effects of displacement on students' learning.

Research Questions:

1. What adaptability challenges are experienced by students resettled after Boko Haram attacks?
2. What psychological and emotional impact does displacement have on students?

Research Hypotheses:

1. Resettled students do not experience significant adaptability challenges following Boko Haram attacks on educational facilities in Gulani Local Government Area.
2. Displacement does not have a significant psychological and emotional impact on the learning of resettled students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adaptability is the ability of an individual to adjust successfully to changes in the environment; for students, it involves adjusting to new schools, teachers, classmates, teaching methods, and learning conditions, with well-adapted students more likely to perform better academically and form positive social relationships. Displacement refers to the forced movement of people from their homes due to conflict, violence, or disaster, and in North-Eastern Nigeria, Boko Haram attacks have displaced millions of people, including school-aged children. Resettlement is the process of relocating displaced persons to safer communities or temporary shelters where they can continue their education and daily lives. The insurgency has severely disrupted education in the region: hundreds of schools have been destroyed or closed, and thousands of students and teachers displaced, resulting in interrupted schooling, poor academic performance, increased dropout rates, and psychological trauma.

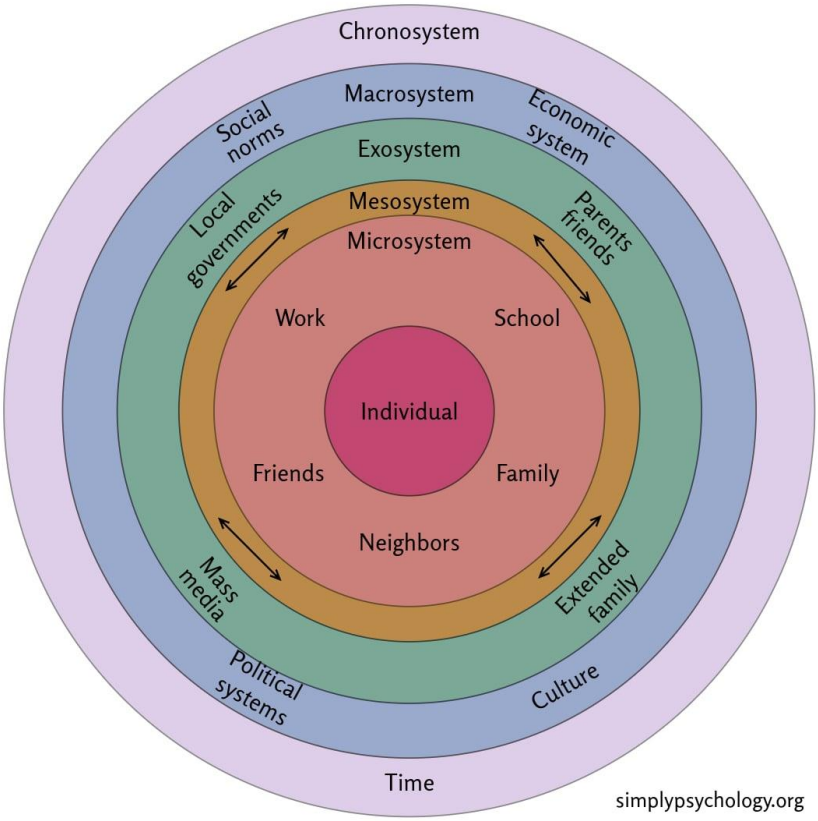
Displaced students commonly experience trauma, fear, anxiety, depression, and loss of confidence after witnessing violence or losing loved ones, problems that reduce concentration, memory, motivation, and classroom participation. Socially, resettled students may face discrimination, language barriers, difficulty forming new friendships, and separation from family, all of which affect emotional well-being and adjustment. Academically, they contend with interrupted learning, overcrowded classrooms, shortages of qualified teachers,

inadequate instructional materials, poor infrastructure, and irregular attendance, factors that negatively affect achievement.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which holds that a child's development is shaped by interacting environmental systems, including the family, school, community, and wider society. When any of these systems is disrupted by conflict or displacement, a child's educational and psychological development is affected.

Figure 1: Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems



Theory, explains human development as influenced by nested, interconnected environmental systems, from the immediate (microsystem, like family/school) to the broad cultural context (macrosystem) and the dimension of time (chronosystem), emphasizing reciprocal relationships where individuals and environments mutually shape each other The theory is relevant here because students displaced by Boko Haram must adjust simultaneously to new schools, teachers, peers, and communities, and their capacity to adapt depends largely on the support available from families, schools, government, and humanitarian organizations.

Empirical evidence supports these concerns. UNESCO (2022) reported that conflict in North-Eastern Nigeria has disrupted the education of millions of children and destroyed numerous educational facilities, emphasizing the need for psychosocial support and safe learning environments. Similarly, UNICEF (2023) found that displaced children face emotional trauma, interrupted learning, inadequate resources, and poor school attendance, recommending strengthened educational support services in displaced communities. The Federal Ministry of Education (2021) further revealed that insecurity has reduced school enrolment and academic performance across conflict-affected communities in Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa States, while other studies conducted in North-East Nigeria indicate that access

to counselling, supportive teachers, and improved facilities enhances resettled students' adaptation and academic achievement.

Although these studies establish the broad educational consequences of the insurgency, few have focused specifically on the adaptability challenges of students resettled within Gulani Local Government Area. This study addresses that gap by providing evidence from this local context, which can inform more targeted educational and psychosocial interventions.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design, considered appropriate for collecting information directly from respondents on the adaptability challenges experienced by students resettled in new shelters after Boko Haram attacks on educational facilities in Gulani Local Government Area (Creswell, 2018). The study was conducted in Gulani Local Government Area of Yobe State, one of the communities most affected by the Boko Haram insurgency, where attacks on communities and educational facilities led to the displacement and resettlement of many students. The population comprised an estimated 500 students resettled in selected secondary schools and temporary learning centres within the area. A sample of 150 students was selected using simple random sampling, which gave every student in the population an equal opportunity to participate (Kothari, 2004).

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled the Adaptability Challenges of Resettled Students Questionnaire (ACRSQ), comprising two sections: Section A captured respondents' demographic information (age, gender, class, and school), while Section B measured adaptability challenges, psychological effects, academic adjustment, learning environment, and available support services on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1). The instrument was validated by experts in Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation, whose corrections were incorporated before administration (Best & Kahn, 2016). Permission was obtained from relevant school authorities, after which questionnaires were personally administered to respondents and retrieved immediately upon completion to ensure a high response rate. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, namely frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores. A benchmark mean of 2.50, the midpoint of the four-point scale, was used as the decision criterion: item means at or above this benchmark were interpreted as “Agree,” and those below as “Disagree.”

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The 150 questionnaires administered to students resettled in selected secondary schools and temporary learning centres in Gulani Local Government Area, all 150 were properly completed and returned, yielding a 100% response rate.

Demographic Characteristics.

As shown in Table 1, 82 respondents (54.7%) were male and 68 (45.3%) were female. Table 2 shows that most respondents (56.7%) were aged 14-17 years, followed by 26.7% aged 10-13 years and 16.6% aged 18 years and above.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	82	54.7
Female	68	45.3
Total	**150**	**100**

Table 2 *Distribution of Respondents by Age*

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
10-13 years	40	26.7
14-17 years	85	56.7
18 years and above	25	16.6
Total	**150**	**100**

Research Question 1

Table 3 presents respondents' mean ratings of the adaptability challenges they experienced. All four items were rated above the 2.50 benchmark, with fear and insecurity (M = 3.45) and difficulty adjusting to a new school (M = 3.41) rated highest, followed by separation from friends and family (M = 3.32) and emotional stress (M = 3.28). The grand mean of 3.37 indicates that respondents agreed they experienced significant adaptability challenges.

Table 3: Mean Responses on Adaptability Challenges Experienced by Resettled Students

S/N	Item	Mean	Decision
1	Difficulty adjusting to a new school	3.41	Agree
2	Separation from friends and family	3.32	Agree
3	Fear and insecurity	3.45	Agree
4	Emotional stress	3.28	Agree
	Grand Mean	**3.37**	

Research Question 2

Table 4 shows that respondents also agreed that displacement had considerable psychological effects, with fear of future attacks (M = 3.51) and poor concentration (M = 3.40) rated highest, followed by anxiety (M = 3.34) and depression (M = 3.18). The grand mean of 3.36 confirms a considerable psychological impact.

Table 4: Mean Responses on Psychological and Emotional Impact of Displacement on Students

	Item	Mean	Decision
5	Anxiety	3.34	Agree
6	Depression	3.18	Agree
7	Poor concentration	3.40	Agree
8	Fear of future attacks	3.51	Agree
	Grand Mean	**3.36**	

The findings reveal that students resettled after Boko Haram attacks face substantial adaptability challenges, including fear, insecurity, emotional stress, and difficulty adjusting to new schools, consistent with UNESCO's (2022) and UNICEF's (2023) reports on the disruptive impact of conflict on displaced children's education and well-being. The prominence of fear and insecurity as the highest-rated challenge underscores the lingering psychological weight of the insurgency, even after physical resettlement.

The study also found psychological effects to significantly affect concentration and motivation, echoing the Federal Ministry of Education's (2021) finding that insecurity has reduced academic performance across conflict-affected communities in Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa States. Viewed through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, these results suggest that disruption to multiple interacting systems, family, school, and community, compounds the difficulty resettled students face in adapting, reinforcing the importance of coordinated support across all these levels rather than isolated interventions.

Beyond psychological factors, the quality of the learning environment, including classrooms, instructional materials, and teacher support, plays an important role in helping students adapt successfully, in line with prior North-Eastern Nigeria studies linking counselling access, supportive teachers, and improved facilities to better adaptation and achievement.

CONCLUSION

The Boko Haram insurgency has had serious consequences for education in Gulani Local Government Area. Students displaced by the conflict continue to experience psychological, social, and academic challenges even after resettlement, despite ongoing efforts by government agencies and humanitarian organizations to restore educational opportunities. Creating safe and supportive learning environments remains essential to helping resettled students adapt successfully and achieve positive academic outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the study recommends that:

1. Government should provide adequate educational facilities in resettlement communities.
2. Professional counsellors should be employed in schools to provide psychosocial support to displaced students.
3. Teachers should receive training in trauma-informed teaching methods.
4. Humanitarian organizations should continue providing learning materials, school uniforms, and educational support.

5. Parents and community leaders should actively support children's education and emotional recovery.

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