

Challenges to Educational Continuity for Displaced Children in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Ensuring uninterrupted education for all children, particularly those impacted by violence and displacement, is a crucial problem in an era of growing globalization. This study examined the challenges to educational continuity for children displaced by insurgency in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was employed. The population was all school-aged children in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 60 displaced children who participated in the study. The instrument used for data collection was titled Challenges to Educational Continuity for Children Displaced by Insurgency Questionnaire (BECCDBIQ), with reliability coefficient of 0.77. Two research questions were answered using frequencies count, percentage and mean while t-test was used to test two hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed that children displaced by insurgency have challenges to educational continuity. These challenges are more pronounced on limited access to schools (3.27), psychosocial and emotional challenges (3.18), gender-specific challenges (3.08), inadequate educational resources (3.04), and teacher shortages (2.84). The findings also showed key challenges preventing children from resuming education post-displacement which included family separation (3.05), loss of peer and community connections (3.00), emotional distress such as anger and fear (3.17), lack of school access in host communities (2.87), and inadequate shelter (2.60). The study revealed no significant gender-based differences in the challenges faced by displaced boys and girls ($t=0.804$; $df=58$; $p>0.05$). To support these displaced children, it is recommended that the Federal Government of Nigeria and the United Nations Children's Fund must develop sustainable policies and programmes that ensure uninterrupted education. Additionally, the Ministry of Education in Katsina State, the Universal Basic Education Commission, and aid organizations are urged to facilitate better access to education, supply necessary learning materials, and offer psychosocial assistance alongside gender-appropriate interventions. The National Emergency Management Agency and local community leaders must work together to reconnect displaced children with their families while guaranteeing their safety within these settings. Furthermore, teachers and school principals should focus on counseling students, strengthening their academic performance, and implementing interventions that are sensitive to gender issues.

Keywords: Access to school, Challenges, Educational continuity, Educational resources, Children displaced by insurgency, Internally displaced persons, Insurgency, Psychosocial, Teacher support

Introduction

Education is a fundamental right of every child, yet millions of children worldwide face disruptions in their schooling due to conflicts, violence, and displacement. In Nigeria, insurgency-driven displacement has significantly affected access to education, particularly in states like Katsina, where violent attacks and insecurity have forced many families to flee their homes. Among the most affected are children, who experience not only the physical dislocation from their communities but also the psychological and academic disruptions that hinder their educational continuity.

Sarah & Michael (2021) described forced displacement as a situation whereby a person or groups of persons have been forced to leave or flee their homes or places of residence. This may be particularly to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations characterized by violence, kidnapping and cattle rustling. Access to quality education in Internally Displaced Peoples' camp serves as a source for children's integration into host community and psychological support that may alleviate children's exposure to societal vices such as recruitment into armed banditry groups, early marriage and prostitution.

Research indicates that forced displacement interrupts educational pathways, with children frequently leaving schools due to insecurity, violence and the necessity to relocate (UNICEF, 2019). In addition, GAD (Gender and Development) Frameworks, opined that the educational learning experiences of displaced children are characterized by uncertainty and disintegration, leading to lesser enrollment rates and higher school dropout (Mastrorillo et al., 2016). Children in displaced settings normally encounter obstacles such as a lack of access to safe schools, inadequate resources, and overstressed educational systems accommodating unexpected arrivals of students (Kirk & Winthrop, 2013). In addition, Betancourt, Meyers-Ohki, Charrow, and Ladd (2013) viewed that children who experience forced displacement often face a numerous of challenges such as loss of access to school, sleeping in open and unsecured place, instability in living conditions, and psychological trauma. These factors jointly deter their ability to engage eloquently in learning.

The International Organization for Migration and United Nations Children Education Fund (IDMC /UNICEF, 2019) submitted that in crisis situations, many displaced children grew deprived of education. Nemine and Zalacro (2019) opined that school provide a degree of stability in the lives of displaced children. It is a critical source of psychological support and may reduce children's exposure to social vices such as sexual abuse, early child marriage and recruitment into armed banditry groups. Access to education is an important element of IDPs' integration into the local/host community. In view of this, it is important

that in situations of emergency, children do not lose their right to access quality education which align with SDGs goal 4 (Sarah, & Michael, 2021)

In addition, the mental effects of displacement thwart children educational attainment. However, research by Betancourt et al. (2013) suggests that the trauma connected with forced displacement affects children's cognitive developmental, emotional happiness, and affect their academic performance. However, the stigma associated with displacement often relegates children from their peers, decrease their motivation and commitment to learning due unsecured environment (Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003). Many studies highlight the importance of context-specific strategies to lessen these adverse effects. The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2021) campaigns for inclusive education policies that are adjustable to the necessities of displaced children, emphasizing the significance of community participation and psychosocial support in augmenting educational resilience.

Subsequently, gender differences intensify the educational Challenges faced by displaced children due to insurgency. Research shows that girls are mainly defenseless during displacement period due to the Nigerian social norms that sometimes prioritize male education (Daniely & Lenderman, 2019). Early marriage, gender-based violence, and domestic responsibilities often thwart girls from joining school, leading to long-term effects on their lives (Werenfels et al., 2018). Furthermore, displaced children struggle with social and emotional challenges, which can further hamper their educational commitment. The trauma associated with forced displacement comprising exposure to violence and loss of family members can lead to anxiety and depression challenges (Mastrorillo et al., 2016). These psychological tolls can affect motivation, concentration and academic achievement.

Furthermore, marginalized groups, such as girls and children with disabilities, face compounded Challenges in accessing education during displacement period. A report by the Global Education Cluster (2018) advocates that these groups experienced large school dropout rates and lesser enrollment in educational programmes compared to their peers, replicating the inter-sectionalist of the conflict, gender, and disability within the framework of forced displacement. A study by Masten and Narayan (2012) highlights that resilience influences, such as community support and the stability of schools, can ease the negative effects of displacement. However, when insurgency leads to protracted crises, children often encounter Challenges such as overcrowding in temporary learning spaces, lack of adequate resources, and a lack of qualified teachers (UNICEF, 2016).

Therefore, challenges to children's educational continuity due to forced displacement is a complex process. Previous researchers have worked on using technology to educate displaced children; educational outcomes for displaced children, impact of conflict on schooling in conflict-affected countries; interventions for children affected by war: the role of education in protecting children in conflict disasters; education and the displacement crisis. None of these studies have investigated these variables in Katsina State, particularly Dutsin-Ma which was the location of the present study. Also, none of the previous study directly worked on examining the challenges to children educational continuity during and after forced displacement. Hence, this study investigated the challenges to educational continuity for children displaced by insurgency in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State, Nigeria

The primary focus of the present study was to investigate the challenges to educational continuity of children displaced by insurgency in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. In addition to this, the study seeks to identify the major challenges encountered by the children during the period of displacement and to find out the challenges they face in resuming their educational activities after the period of displacement. Furthermore, the study determined whether there is significant gender-based differences in the challenges faced by displaced children during the period of displacement, as well as to ascertain whether the challenges encountered after displacement are greater for girls than for boys.

Research Questions

1. What are the main challenges to educational continuity faced by children during forced displacement due to insurgency?
2. What challenges do children face in resuming their education after forced displacement due to insurgency?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the challenges to educational continuity faced by boys and girls during forced displacement due to insurgency.

H₀₂: The educational challenges encountered by children after forced displacement are not more pronounced for girls than boys.

Literature Review

Scholars have repeatedly identified a complex web of barriers that determine whether displaced children can maintain continuity in their education. The most persistent of these is a break in their entry to formal education. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2021) indicated that a majority of refugee children are not in school globally, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Burde et al. (2022) suggested that issues like indirect

schooling costs, travel, insecurity, and poor infrastructure often prevent displaced children from getting to school. According to Fransen et al. (2018), displacement can be a reason why displaced children attend or complete less schooling because their frequent moves prevent them from staying in the same school for long. Chimbunde (2019) argued that educational continuity is difficult when displaced children are forced to move to other schools repeatedly and are forced to adapt to new schools, new teachers, new classrooms, and new schools.

Research has also highlighted the lack of educational resources available in a displacement setting. Adesina and Esther (2021) found that large classes, shortage of teachers, and lack of instructional materials have affected the quality of education given to internally displaced children in Nigeria. Al-Saadi (2023) also said poor learning centers, insufficient instructional materials, and inadequate institutional structures are important obstacles to learning among refugee children. Koehler and Schneider (2019) noted that temporary education policies and irregular funding also inhibit schools from supporting displaced children consistently. Additionally, Taylor and Sidhu (2012) pointed out that schools receiving displaced children are often faced with increased enrollment, and many times, these schools do not have enough classrooms, teachers, and instructional materials to meet demand.

Some studies have also investigated psychosocial factors affecting the learning of displaced children. According to Kamande (2025), displacement often affects children through trauma, fear, anxiety, stress, and depression as a result of exposure to violence and displacement due to war. Otorkpa et al. (2024) stated that these psychological effects of displacement can affect concentration, behavior, attention, memory, and performance. Similarly, Betancourt et al. (2013) said war affects the mental and emotional health of children; their relationships with other people and their coping strategies. Vrdoljak et al. (2022) indicated that displacement can affect displaced children's education because they struggle with emotional and social difficulties, displacement from their cultural background, and lack of family support. Nicolai and Triplehorn (2003) pointed out that education could be an effective tool for helping children affected by war to feel safe, be part of a routine, and feel like they belong.

It has also been argued in research that displacement may affect the learning of boys and girls differently based on the gender roles and social expectations placed on children. Werenfels et al. (2018) found that displacement can affect female children in displacement settings and can interrupt their education due to their marriage to older men, household responsibilities, and exposure to gender-based violence. Kulari and Figueiredo (2025) said

that insecurity and limited freedom of movement can cause females to drop out of or never start school. Gausman et al. (2022) observed that many displaced families marry their children off at a young age in order to reduce the financial burden at home or as a way to protect them, thus cutting off their education. In contrast, Hunersen (2024) observed that boys frequently bear the responsibility of working to financially support their households, a duty that also distracts them from their schooling.

Additionally, Daniely and Lederman (2019) posited that displacement often re-establishes traditional gender dynamics, which places boys at greater risk of labour exploitation and makes girls susceptible to exclusion from school. Some studies have investigated gendered differences in the psychological impact of displacement on children. For example, Hanáková et al. (2025) discovered that girls are more inclined to suffer from anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder, while boys are more prone to engaging in risk-taking behaviour, exhibiting aggressive tendencies, and rebelling against authority. Similarly, Fazel et al. (2023) found that girls tend to turn their anguish inward, whereas boys are likely to externalize their emotional discomfort. In another study, Trotter and Woodcock (2025) reported that girls in displacement settings tend to grapple with loneliness, social isolation, and exclusion, while boys are more likely to cope with their feelings through peer pressure and deviant behaviour. These studies, therefore, suggest that psychosocial support programmes for displaced children should be gender responsive.

Another factor that influences educational continuity following displacement is post-displacement condition. Taylor and Sidhu (2012) observed that children are often challenged in integrating themselves into new schools in terms of their school systems, languages, and modes of instruction, after resettlement. Koehler and Schneider (2019) further asserted that poor and inconsistent educational planning and temporary learning interventions result in learning gaps that affect displaced children's long-term academic performance. In addition, Dryden-Peterson (2017) pointed out that multiple movements between camps, communities and schools often contribute to the erosion of children's sense of belonging and educational aspirations. In the same vein, UNESCO (2021) reported that education systems are usually inadequate in providing flexibility and support for displaced children to remain in schools. Likewise, UNICEF (2019) noted that displaced children experience enrolment barriers in host communities' schools because of the absence of school records, language barriers and exclusion.

In specific relationship with the Nigerian context, some studies have investigated educational experiences of displaced children. For example, Sarah and Michael (2021) observed that the educational access of internally displaced children to quality education

in Nigeria is compromised by insecurity, shortage of teachers and inadequate learning facilities in IDP camps. Kirk and Winthrop (2013) also asserted that schools in emergency situation are often over-burdened and may be unable to meet the educational demands of large numbers of displaced children. Similarly, Mastrotillo et al. (2016) found that conflict-affected children have lower enrolment rates, higher drop-out rates and poorer academic achievement than their non-displaced counterparts. In the same vein, UNICEF (2019) further stated that displacement exposes children to multiple deprivations which restrict their educational participation and long-term development. The reviewed studies have pointed out that displaced children face education, psychological, social, and gender related challenges that affect their educational continuity. But most of these studies focused on general displacement or other countries' refugees. There seems to be a dearth of information on challenges affecting educational continuity of children displaced by insurgency in Katsina State, particularly children in Dutsin-Ma LGA. In view of this, the present study is justified.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was utilized to gather data for the study. The design was considered suitable for the study to collect numerical data and describe the existing phenomena. The population of the study consisted of all school-aged children who had been displaced from their homes by the insurgency in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State. The study used a purposive sampling technique to select sixty (60) respondents (displaced children) from IDP camps. The sample was made up of 15 respondents from 4 of the affected wards in Dutsin Ma LGA. The children selected were those displaced by insurgency.

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire called the challenges to Educational Continuity for Children Displaced by Insurgency (BECCDBI). The instrument was made up of 25 items measuring: access to school, educational resources availability, psychosocial challenges, gender challenges and post displacement challenges. The items were scaled on a 4-point Likert format from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree with a score of 4 to 1 respectively. The questionnaire was written in clear and simple language for respondents to understand. Validity of the instrument was determined by subjecting it to face and content validation by early childhood and measurement and evaluation experts. Their comments were used to improve on the instrument in terms of clarity, relevance and adequacy of the items. The reliability of the instrument was established using the test-retest method with a two-week interval between administrations, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), it yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.77, indicating that the instrument was sufficiently reliable for the study.

Researchers and four research assistants who were trained administered the instrument to the respondents in the IDP camps selected. Instructions and further explanations were given to respondents where necessary for easy and accurate responses. The researchers complied to ethical principles guiding research in education throughout the investigation. For instance, informed consent from participants and their carers was sought where needed, confidentiality and anonymity was strictly maintained and some children were given extra support to emotionally deal with some of the questions which was related to traumatic events.

The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using independent samples t-test at the 0.05 level of significance. A criterion mean of 2.50 was set as the basis for acceptance or rejection of the null hypotheses.

Results

Table 1: *Distribution of participants based on Gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	32	53.3
Female	28	46.7
Total	60	100

Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents based on gender. The table indicates that, out of the sixty (60) participants that partook in the study, 32 were male, representing 53.3% of the total sample, while twenty-eight (28) were female, accounting for 46.7% of the total sample. In view of this therefore majority of the respondents were male.

Research Question One: What are the main challenges to educational continuity faced by children during forced displacement due to insurgency?

Table 2: *Frequencies count, percentage and mean showing the main Challenges to educational continuity for children during forced displacement due to insurgency*

SN	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
	Access to School					
1	There is no school nearby	45(75.0%)	8(13.3%)	2(3.3%)	5(8.3%)	3.55
2	Don't always come to school due to safety concern.	40(66.7%)	15(25.0%)	3(5.0%)	2(3.3%)	3.55

3	I have to a travel long distance to school thereby making it difficult to attend regularly.	37(61.7%)	14(23.3%)	6(10.0%)	3(5.0%)	3.42
4	Schools in my host community are overcrowded.	25(41.7%)	22(36.7%)	7(11.7%)	6(10.0%)	3.10
5	My parents do not have money to send me to school	19(31.7%)	21(35.0%)	6(10.0%)	14(23.3%)	2.75
	Weighted Mean					3.27

	Educational Resources					
6	There are no adequate classrooms in my school.	28(46.7%)	16(26.7%)	11(18.3%)	5(8.3%)	3.12
7	There are no available notebooks in my school.	21(35.0%)	18(30.0%)	14(23.3%)	7(11.7%)	2.88
8	There are no enough play materials in my school.	29(48.3%)	14(23.3%)	7(11.7%)	10(16.7%)	3.03
9	There are no materials for outdoor activities in my school.	30(50.0%)	17(28.3%)	4(6.7%)	9(15.0%)	3.13
10	There are no online educational plaforms in my camp.	25(41.7%)	18(30.0%)	10(16.7%)	7(11.7%)	3.02
	Weighted Mean					3.04

	Teacher Support and Staffing					
11	Teachers in our school encourage us to learn	18(30.0%)	28(46.7%)	9(15.0%)	5(8.3%)	2.98
12	Teachers give school uniform or school or other materials needed in school free of charge	24(40.0%)	18(30.0%)	10(16.7%)	8(13.3%)	2.97
13	Teachers accommodate me whenever I come to school late.	18(30.0%)	21(35.0%)	12(20.0%)	9(15.0%)	2.80
14	My teachers do not seem to understand my needs as a displaced child.	21(35.0%)	13(21.7%)	19(31.7%)	7(11.7%)	2.80

15	I feel like being treated unfairly in school due to my background.	14(23.3%)	24(40.0%)	10(16.7%)	12(20.0%)	2.67
	Weighted Mean					2.84

Gender Specific Challenges						
16	Girl child is restricted from moving outside their camp due to safety concern.	23(38.3%)	13(21.7%)	13(21.7%)	11(18.3%)	2.80
17	Majority of girls child have no access to safe and private sanitation facilities in their camp.	38(63.3%)	11(18.3%)	6(10.0%)	5(8.3%)	3.37
18	Boys and girls are re-enrolled into primary school in IDP camp.	30(50.0%)	26(43.3%)	2(3.3%)	2(3.3%)	3.40
19	I am forced to work during school hours to support my family, leaving little time for school activities.	17(28.3%)	21(35.0%)	13(21.7%)	9(15.0%)	2.77
20	Displaced Girl child is pressurized to drop out of school to support their family.	22(36.7%)	14(23.3%)	8(13.3%)	16(26.7%)	2.70
	Weighted Mean					3.08

Psychosocial and Emotional Challenges						
21	Displaced children sometimes suffer from fear and anxiety to go back to school due to change of environment.	31(51.7%)	18(30.0%)	2(3.3%)	9(15.0%)	3.18
22	Child who lost his family member due to insurgency feels difficult to go back to school	32(53.3%)	18(30.0%)	6(10.0%)	4(6.7%)	3.30
23	Children sleep in an open and unsecure shelter making it difficult to be ready for school	26(43.3%)	18(30.0%)	9(15.0%)	7(11.7%)	3.05
24	Children suffer from	28(46.7%)	19(31.7%)	8(13.3%)	5(8.3%)	3.17

	malnutrition in IDP camp making it difficult to concentrate in school					
25	Displaced children do suffer depression find it is difficult going back to school.	31(51.7%)	15(25.0%)	9(15.0%)	5(8.3%)	3.20
	Weighted Mean					3.18

Table 2 showed frequencies count, percentage and mean of the main challenges to educational continuity for children during forced displacement due to insurgency. The most prevalent challenges to educational continuity for children during forced displacement due to insurgency was access to School (3.27), followed by psychosocial and emotional challenges (3.18), followed by gender specific challenges (3.08), followed by educational resources (3.04), followed by teacher support and staffing (2.84). All the above factors are the significant challenges to educational continuity for children during forced displacement due to insurgency since all the weighted mean are all above the cut-off mean of 2.50, which is the benchmark for decisions.

Research Question Two: What challenges do children face in resuming their education after forced displacement due to insurgency?

Table 3: *Frequencies count, percentage and mean showing challenges children faced in resuming their education after forced displacement due to insurgency*

S/N	Post Displacement Challenges	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
1	I have been separated from their family due to insurgency.	26(43.3%)	17(28.3%)	11(18.3%)	6(10.0%)	3.05
2	I lost contact with his peers, friends and community members.	26(43.3%)	18(30.0%)	6(10.0%)	10(16.7%)	3.00
3	I exhibits anger, fear and aggression due to displacement.	30(50.0%)	16(26.7%)	8(13.3%)	6(10.0%)	3.17
4	I have no access to school in his host community.	21(35.0%)	19(31.7%)	11(18.3%)	9(15.0%)	2.87
5	I sleep in an open place.	16(26.7%)	19(31.7%)	10(16.7%)	15(25.0%)	2.60

Table 3 showed frequencies count, percentage and mean showing challenges children faced in resuming their education after forced displacement due to insurgency. Based on the mean distribution of each item above, all are above the cut-off mean of 2.50. Which implies that the challenges children faced in resuming their education after forced displacement due to insurgency include child is separated from their family due to insurgency (3.05), displaced child lost contact with his peers, friends and community members (3.00), child exhibits anger, fear and aggression due to displacement (3.17), child has no access to school in his host community (2.87) and displaced child sleeps in an open place (2.60).

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the challenges to educational continuity faced by boys and girls during forced displacement due to insurgency.

Table 4: Summary of independent sample t-test showing boys and girls face significantly different challenges to educational continuity during forced displacement due to insurgency

Gender	N	Mean	St.dev	t	df	Sig	Decision
Male	32	83.38	8.6835				
				.804	58	.425	Not Significant
Female	28	81.64	7.9032				

Table 4 revealed that there is no significant difference in the challenges to educational continuity during forced displacement due to insurgency faced by boys and girls. ($t=.804$; $df=58$; $P>0.05$). The hypothesis which implies that boys and girls do not face significantly different Challenges to educational continuity during forced displacement due to insurgency is therefore retained.

H₀₂: The educational challenges encountered by children after forced displacement are not more pronounced for girls than boys.

Table 5: Summary of independent sample t-test showing the educational challenges encountered by children after forced displacement are more pronounced for girls than boys

Gender	N	Mean	St.dev	T	DF	Sig	Decision
Male	32	14.91	3.1352				
				.620	58	.537	Not Significant
Female	28	14.43	2.7813				

Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference in the educational challenges encountered by boys and girls after forced displacement. ($t=.620$; $df=58$; $P>0.05$). The hypothesis which implies there is no significant difference in the educational challenges encountered by boys and girls after forced displacement is therefore retained.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that the most prevalent challenges to educational continuity for children during forced displacement due to insurgency were related to access to school (3.27), followed by psychosocial and emotional challenges (3.18), gender-specific challenges (3.08), educational resources (3.04), and teacher support and staffing (2.84). The fact that all the weighted mean scores were above the benchmark of 2.50 indicates that these factors constitute significant barriers to educational continuity among displaced children. The prominence of access to school as the most critical challenge suggests that physical availability and safety of schooling facilities remain the foremost concern in conflict-affected areas. This may be due to the destruction of school infrastructure, insecurity along routes to school, and the relocation of families to areas without functional schools.

This finding aligns with the work of Kirk and Winthrop (2013), who reported that children in displaced settings often face limited access to safe schools, overstretched educational systems, and inadequate resources. Similarly, studies by UNICEF (2019) and the Global Education Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2021) emphasize that conflict and displacement significantly disrupt access to education, particularly in fragile contexts. The high ranking of psychosocial challenges further reflects the emotional toll of displacement, as children exposed to violence, loss, and instability may experience anxiety, fear, and trauma, which negatively affect their ability to concentrate and participate in learning. This is consistent with findings by Betancourt et al. (2013), who noted that exposure to conflict-related trauma significantly impairs children's emotional well-being and academic engagement.

The relatively lower, yet still significant, ranking of teacher support and staffing may be attributed to the shortage of qualified teachers in displacement settings, as well as the increased burden on available teachers due to overcrowded classrooms. This supports the findings of Nicolai and Triplehorn (2003), who observed that emergency education settings often struggle with inadequate teaching personnel and poor instructional quality. Additionally, the issue of educational resources highlights the lack of textbooks, learning materials, and conducive learning environments, which are essential for effective teaching and learning.

Furthermore, the study revealed that children faced several challenges in resuming their education after displacement, including separation from family members (3.05), loss of peer and community networks (3.00), emotional distress such as anger, fear, and aggression (3.17), lack of access to schools in host communities (2.87), and poor living conditions such as sleeping in open places (2.60). These findings suggest that the impact of displacement extends beyond immediate disruption to long-term reintegration difficulties. Emotional distress emerging as the highest challenge indicates that psychological recovery plays a crucial role in children's ability to return to school.

This finding is in agreement with Betancourt et al. (2013), who reported that displaced children often experience trauma, unstable living conditions, and lack of access to education, all of which hinder effective learning. Similarly, UNICEF (2016) noted that protracted crises result in overcrowded learning spaces, inadequate resources, and poor living conditions, which further complicate children's return to school. The loss of social networks may reduce children's sense of belonging and motivation to attend school, while family separation can lead to economic hardship and increased responsibilities, limiting opportunities for schooling. These conditions collectively create a cycle of educational disruption and reduced participation.

In addition, the study found that there was no significant difference in the challenges to educational continuity faced by boys and girls during forced displacement ($t = .804$; $df = 58$; $p > 0.05$). A possible explanation for this finding is that insurgency and displacement create generalized hardships that affect all children regardless of gender, such as lack of access to schools, insecurity, and inadequate resources. In such extreme conditions, survival needs may overshadow gender distinctions, leading to relatively similar experiences for both boys and girls.

However, this finding contradicts the work of Werenfels et al. (2018) and Lloyd (2006), who reported that girls are often disproportionately affected by displacement due to factors such as early marriage, gender-based violence, and domestic responsibilities. The difference in findings may be attributed to contextual variations, sample size, or the specific characteristics of the study area, where both boys and girls may be equally exposed to the immediate effects of insurgency.

Similarly, the study revealed no significant difference in the educational challenges encountered by boys and girls after displacement ($t = .620$; $df = 58$; $p > 0.05$). This suggests that post-displacement challenges such as emotional distress, lack of access to schools, and poor living conditions affect both genders in comparable ways. One possible reason for this

is that the structural limitations in host communities, including inadequate school facilities and resources, create uniform barriers for all displaced children.

This finding, however, is inconsistent with UNICEF (2019), which reported that displacement often disrupts educational pathways differently for boys and girls, with girls being more likely to drop out due to socio-cultural pressures. The disparity between the present study and previous research may indicate that, while gender-specific vulnerabilities exist, the immediate and severe impact of displacement in conflict zones like Dutsin-Ma may overshadow these differences, resulting in a more uniform experience among displaced children.

The findings of this study underscore the complex and interrelated nature of the challenges to educational continuity among displaced children. They highlight the need for comprehensive interventions that address not only access to education but also psychosocial support, resource provision, and inclusive policies to ensure that all children, regardless of gender, can continue their education in the face of displacement.

Recommendations

In line with this, the Ministry of Education in Katsina State, in coordination with the Universal Basic Education Commission and humanitarian groups, must prioritize the education of displaced children by increasing access, providing resources, facilitating psychosocial and emotional support services, and attending to gender-specific issues, while ensuring that both girls and boys displaced participate in and receive benefits from their education equally during displacement as well as afterwards.

The Nigerian National Emergency Management Agency, community leaders and the NGOs should make deliberate attempts to reunite displaced children with families and their friends, peers and members of the communities to help alleviate fear, aggression and emotional distress, and should provide safe and secure conditions to help lessen the effects of displacement and reduce the exposure to violence, exploitation and other social vices.

School administrators and teachers should work closely with child protection agencies to offer interventions that specifically address the educational difficulties experienced by displaced boys and girls post-displacement, which include counseling and academic support, as well as flexible school placement and gender sensitive strategies.

The Federal Government of Nigeria, international development partners and humanitarian agencies should also implement strategic and long term interventions to

enhance the educational access of displaced children, focusing on educational resources, gender sensitive issues, provision of psychosocial support and increasing school access, while the United Nations Children's Fund, local communities and government agencies should work harder to reunite displaced children with their families and communities for a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the ongoing challenges faced by these children and contribute to the broader discourses on sustaining the educational access of displaced children globally.

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