

## **Influence of PTSD, psychological distress and posttraumatic growth on psychological wellbeing among internally displaced persons in Makurdi, Benue State**

Taiye Emmanuel Ojo<sup>1\*</sup>

### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims at examining the influence of posttraumatic stress disorder, psychological distress and posttraumatic growth on psychological wellbeing among internally displaced persons in Makurdi, Benue state. A cross-sectional research design was adopted and a battery of psychological tests consisting of PTSD Diagnostic Scale for DSM-5, Kessler Psychological Distress Scale, Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory and Ryff's Psychological-Well-Being-Scales-(PWB) was administered individually to the purposefully selected one hundred and twenty-six (126) Internally Displaced Persons in Agan IDPs camp Makurdi Local Government, Area in Benue state. Five hypotheses were formulated Multiple Regression analyses; path model and factorial analysis of variance were used to test the hypotheses. The results showed that that there was significant independent influence of PTSD, psychological distress and PTG on psychological wellbeing of IDPs in Makurdi, Benue State [ $F=4.814$ ,  $R^2 = 0.106$ ,  $P<.01$ ]. The predictor variables accounted for 10.0% of the total variation on psychological wellbeing, no significant influence was established between posttraumatic stress disorders and psychological wellbeing ( $\beta= 0.070$   $t=.749$ ;  $P>.05$ ) but there was significant influence of psychological distress ( $\beta= .297$   $t=3.239$ ;  $P<.01$ ) and posttraumatic growth ( $\beta= -.200$   $t=-2.164$ ;  $P<.05$ ) on psychological wellbeing among the IDPs. Also using psychological distress as a mediator shows that posttraumatic stress disorder directly influence psychological distress and indirect through psychological distress as the mediator influence psychological wellbeing among IDPs in Makurdi. Likewise there was no significant main and interaction influence of sex and marital satisfaction on psychological wellbeing among the IDPs. Thus, the study concluded that posttraumatic stress disorder, psychological distress and posttraumatic growth predict psychological distress among internally displaced person in Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. Therefore, psychosocial intervention should be provided by mental health professional and sufficient support should be provided by the government, agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations and other private organization so as to diminish the negative effect of psychological distress faced by the IDPs and enhance or improve their mental health and psychological wellbeing.

**Keywords:** PTSD, Psychological Distress, PTG, Psychological wellbeing and IDPs

<sup>1</sup> Gritwel Child Development Research and Resource Centre, Ifako-Ijaiye, Lagos, Nigeria

\*Responding Author

Received: August 27, 2019; Revision Received: October 29, 2019; Accepted: December 25, 2019

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Internally displaced persons (IDP) are people who are forced to evict their homes to a secluded and secured place within their country's borders. This relocation may result from inter-communal conflict arising from ethnic or religious tensions, ethnic strife, violence attack or violence in the name of political objectives, defilements of human rights and/or disasters either naturally or human made, there were currently 31.1 million new internal displacement by conflict, violence and disasters in 2016. This is the equivalent of one person forced to flee every second (IDMC, 2017), Sub-saharan Africa 38.0% - 2.6m, Middle East and North Africa 30.7% - 2.1m, South Asia 15.9% - 1.1m, Latin America and the Caribbean 6.3% - 0.4m, East Asia and the Pacific 4.6% - 0.3m, European and Central Asia 4.5% - 0.3m (IDMC, GRID, 2017). According to Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) round XIX Assessments by the Organization for Migration (IOM), 2017; There are 1,713,771 displaced individual in Nigeria out of which 56% of the IDP population are Children (0-17years), and 54% of the IDP population are female of the total figure of IDPs in Nigeria, the assessment indicate that 12.6% were displaced to inter-communal clashes, 2.4% by natural disaster and 85% as a result of insurgency attacks by the Islamists (IDMC). Currently, there are over 80,000 IDPs in Benue State (SEMA, 2018) due the current inter-communal conflict between the suspected Fulani herdsmen and indigenous people of Benue and this crisis has caused trauma and psychological distress which in turn may affect their psychological wellbeing. It is however imperative at this point to investigate the extent to which this inter-communal conflict has affected the psychological wellbeing of the IDPs in Benue state and the need to grow out of the traumatic experience caused by the exposure to threatening events and killings by the suspected Fulani Herdsmen. Besides, most internally displaced persons (IDPs) live in developing and low-income countries experiencing a conflict, crisis; their psychological wellbeing and psychosocial health has not been well addressed (Thapa and Hauff, 2005). Cordova and Andrykowski, (as cited in Forest et al, 2008, p 948) also posited that "Distressing or harmful events can lead to negative outcomes, such as post-traumatic stress symptoms (PTSS), but they can also lead to positive outcomes, an experience termed post-traumatic growth (PTG)". PTG may improve the psychological wellbeing, including depression, positive wellbeing, health behaviors and positive affect (Stanton, Bower and Low, 2006).

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder that may arise when an individual witnesses a threatening event and traumatic events which make the individual to experience fear, terror or helplessness (Gary, 2015). Psychological distress on the other hand, is a set of painful mental and physical symptoms that are associated with normal fluctuations of mood in most people. Psychological distress may indicate the beginning of major depressive disorder, anxiety disorder, schizophrenia, somatization disorder, or a variety of other clinical conditions.(Gary, 2015) while Posttraumatic growth can be said to be positive outcome of any distressing or traumatic event – that is, when an individual is growing out of the traumatic events. Oginyi, Mbam & James, (2017) found that depression, psychological distress, social support and coping strategies jointly predict psychological well-being among IDPs in South Eastern Nigeria. Cao, Hwang and Juan (2015); posited that there was significant influence among internally displaced and the psychological problems such as depression. Akhonzada, Qadir, Maqsood, Rasool and Raza Ur Rehman (2015) found that psychological distress were high in case groups exposed to traumatic experience compared to the control group who doesn't witness traumatic related experience. Onyencho, Omeiza and Wakil (2014) found that PTSD had been found to be significantly related with Psychological well-being. Lili (2015), found out that there was no significant influence of posttraumatic

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growth and psychological distress/wellbeing among Georgian IDPs and non IDPs But Jayasuyira (2013), concluded that there was significant influence of posttraumatic growth on mental health and well-being and it is higher among those people with experience living in IDP camps compared to people who have never lived in IDP camps. Mark (1996), found that gender and marital satisfaction interact to predict individual psychological wellbeing. Also, Hamid and Musa (2010) found significant influence of gender and marital status on mental health and psychological wellbeing among internally displaced persons. Sheikh, Abdulaziz, Agunbiade, Joseph, Ebiti and Adekeye (2010) conducted a study on determining the psychological impact of internal displacement, of the individuals who were displaced as a result of an armed conflict in Swat. 126 internally displaced persons (61 males and 65 females) were selected from Jalozai camp. between 20 to 75 years. Their results indicated that there were differences between males and females, females are higher on internalizing problems and lower on psychological well-being among internally displaced persons. Hence, the important of this fieldwork research is to determine and examine the extent to which PTSD, psychological Distress and PTG influence psychological wellbeing of the IDPs in Benue state.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this research is to examine the influence of symptomatic posttraumatic stress disorders, psychological distress and posttraumatic growth on psychological wellbeing of the internally displaced persons in Benue state. The main objective can be examined in the following specific objectives:

1. To investigate the joint and independent influence of PTSD, psychological distress and PTG on psychological wellbeing of IDPs in Benue State.
2. To examine the main and interaction influence of sex and marital status on psychological wellbeing of the IDPs in Benue State

### **Research Hypothesis**

1. There will be significant joint and independent influence of PTSD, psychological distress and PTG on psychological wellbeing of IDPs in Benue State.
2. There will be significant main and interaction influence of sex and marital status on psychological wellbeing of the IDPs in Markurdi.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Sample***

The population size comprises of all the internally displaced persons at Agan camp, Markurdi, Benue state. The total numbers of IDPs in the camp were over 10,000 including children and adults but an inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to select the participants who responded to the questionnaires. The inclusion criteria are Internally displaced persons, children and adult beyond 6 years of age and who meet the diagnostic criteria for DSM-5 while exclusion criteria are children below 6 years and those who did not meet the diagnostic criteria for DSM-5.

### ***Instruments***

An already developed instrument was used to collect data from the respondents. The following adopted research instruments were used:

**Section A:** It measured the socio-demographic variables which comprises of the sex, age, marital status, educational qualification, religion and reasons for staying in IDP camp.

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**Section B:** PTSD Diagnostic Scale for DSM-5 developed Edna B. Foa and Sandy Capaldi (2013), 24-item questionnaire; a semi-structure interview to make diagnosis of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and the severity of the symptoms. The purpose of the semi structure interview is to determine whether a symptom is present and to evaluate the current severity of that symptom. The severity ratings are based on a combination of symptom frequency and intensity. Severity is rated on a five-point scale as follows: 1 = Not at all, 2 = Once per week or less / a little, 3 = 2 to 3 times per week / somewhat, 4 = 4 to 5 times per week / a lot, 5 = 6 or more times a week / severe. The PTSD Diagnostic Scale demonstrated excellent internal reliability alpha 0.95 and test-retest ( $r=0.90$ ) and a convergent validity of ( $r= 0.90$ ).

**Section C:** Kessler Psychological Distress Scale developed by (K10) Kessler and Mroczek (1992) self-report, 10-item questionnaire intended to yield a global measure of distress based on questions about anxiety and depressive symptoms that a person has experienced in the most recent 4 week period. It is rated on a five-point scale as follows: 1 = none of the time, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = some of the time 4 = most of the time 5 = all the time. The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale has high internal consistence of Cronbach alpha 0.88

**Section D:** Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory developed by L. G. Calhoun and R. G. Tedeschi (1999), 21-item questionnaires. It is rated on a 6 point scale as follows 1 = I did not experience this change as a result of my crisis, 2 = I experienced this change to a very small degree as a result of my crisis, 3 = I experienced this change to a small degree as a result of my crisis, 4 = I experienced this change to a moderate degree as a result of my crisis, 4 = I experienced this change to a great degree as a result of my crisis, 5 = I experienced this change to a very great degree as a result of my crisis.

The Post Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) is scored by adding all the responses which is referred to as PTGI Factors. The PTGI factors are relating to others, new possibilities, personal strength, spiritual change, appreciation of life.

**Section E:** Ryff's Psychological Well Being Scales (PWB) developed by Ryff (1989), 42-item questionnaire, self-report inventory that assesses the six dimension of individual's psychological wellbeing. The dimension are autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationship, purpose in life, self-acceptance. It also a rated on a five-point scale from which are 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree. Internal consistency ranges between .87 and .96 and test-retest reliability coefficient ranged between .78 and .97 for the six subscales. This demonstrates that the scale is reliable and valid instrument.

### ***Procedure***

Letter of introduction was collected from the department of psychology, Faculty of the Social Sciences, university of Lagos and submitted to the IDPs camp director who gave permission to conduct the research and helped in building rapport among the IDPs. Afterwards, ten research assistants were recruited and trained on how to use the instrument. The data was collected within two days approximately 3-45 minutes and one hundred and twenty-six (126) IDPs who meant the inclusion criteria were purposively selected after giving their consent to filling the questionnaire with assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. Some of the participants were illiterate while some were unable to understand English but were communicated through research assistants who served as the moderator and communicated to them in their native/local dialect in order to obtain their response. Participants were also informed that there were not under compulsion or force to participate and that they have the

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right to withdraw at any point in time in they feels so. They were also informed that there was no right or wrong answer to the questions and that they should be truthful and honest in their response. One hundred and twenty-six (126) questionnaires were distributed using purposive sampling technique with the aid of research assistants recruited. One hundred and twenty-six (126) were returned. Thereafter, the data collected were used for statistical analysis.

**RESULTS**

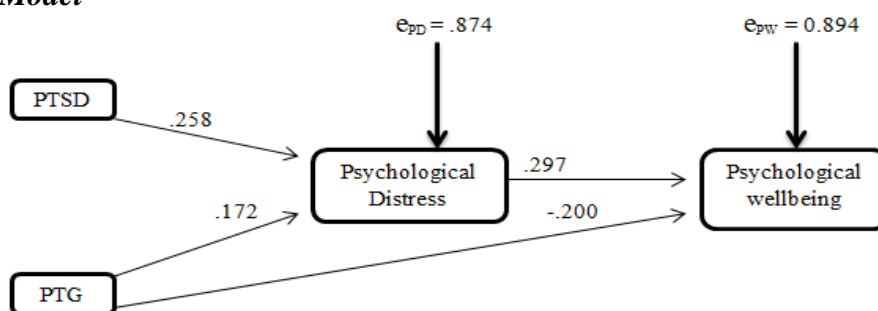
Hypothesis one was tested using multiple regression linear regression and path model analysis. The result of the hypothesis are presented in the tables below

*Table 1 Summary Table of Multiple Regressions showing Joint and independent influence of PTSD, Psychological distress and PTG on psychological wellbeing*

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p	β	t	p
PTSD	.325	.106	4.814	<.01	.070	.749	N.S
Psychological Distress					.297	3.239	<.01
PTG					-.200	-2.164	<.05

From the table, it can be said that there is significant independent influence of PTSD, psychological distress and PTG on psychological wellbeing of IDPs in Makurdi, Benue State [F=4.814, R<sup>2</sup> = 0.106, P<.01]. The predictor variables accounted for 10.0% of the total variation on psychological wellbeing. The result also revealed that there is no significant influence of posttraumatic stress disorder on psychological wellbeing among the IDPs (β= 0.070 t=.749; P>.05); but psychological distress (β= .297 t=3.239; P<.01) and posttraumatic growth (β= -.200 t=-2.164; P<.05).have significant influence on psychological wellbeing among the IDPs

**Fig 1: Path Model**



Error variance is computed as  $\sqrt{1-R^2}$

From the above path model it can be revealed that psychological distress significantly influence psychological wellbeing of the IDPs [β = .297; P<.01], although posttraumatic stress disorder has no significant direct influence on psychological wellbeing among the IDPs [β = .070; P>.01] but has significant indirect influence through psychological distress [β = .258; P<.01] likewise posttraumatic growth has only direct significant influence on psychological wellbeing among the IDPs. [β = -.200; P<.05]. This confirms the stated hypothesis.

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***Hypothesis Two***

The second hypothesis which stated that there will be significant influence of sex and marital status on psychological wellbeing of the IDPs in Markurdi was tested using 2x3 factorial analysis of variance and represented in the table below:

***Table 2: Summary table of 2x3 factorial ANOVA showing main and interaction influence of sex and marital status on psychological wellbeing among the internally displaced persons***

Source	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	4	169.896	.770	.547
Intercept	1	392224.062	1778.497	.000
Sex	1	253.002	1.147	.286
Marital Status	2	294.534	1.336	.267
Sex * Marital Status	1	224.450	1.018	.315
Error	121	220.537		
Total	126			
Corrected Total	125			

From the result, it can be revealed that there is no significant interaction influence of main and interaction influence of sex and marital status on psychological wellbeing of the IDPs in Markurdi ( $F=1.018$ ,  $df(1,126)$ ;  $P>.05$ ). It can also be revealed that there is not main influence of sex ( $F=1.147$ ,  $df(1,126)$ ;  $P>.05$ ) and marital status ( $F=1.336$ ,  $df(1,126)$ ;  $P>.05$ ) on psychological wellbeing of the IDPs in Markurdi. Therefore, the stated hypothesis is thereby rejected.

**DISCUSSION**

The first hypothesis which stated that there will be joint and independent influence of PTSD, psychological distress and PTG on psychological wellbeing of IDPs in Benue State was accepted as the result revealed that there is significant joint influence of PTSD, psychological distress and PTG on psychological wellbeing of IDPs in Benue State and the predictor variables accounted for 10.0% of the total variation on psychological wellbeing. This finding agreed with the findings of (Oginyi, Mbam & James, 2017) who found out that depression, psychological distress, social support and coping strategies jointly predict psychological wellbeing among IDPs. It can be seen that most of the previous related empirical reviews were in support of this findings that posttraumatic stress disorder, psychological distress and posttraumatic growth will jointly predict psychological wellbeing. It also means that psychological wellbeing of internally displaced persons who meet DSM-5 diagnostic criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder can be tampered or affected as a result of combined influence of psychological distress posed by the traumatic stressor or situation likewise such an IDPs can experience growth through social support from his/her the host community which can as well determine their wellbeing psychologically. The findings also corroborate with research conducted by Cao, Hwang and Juan (2015); they posited that there was a significant influence among internally displaced and the psychological problems such as depression. Result also revealed that higher level of psychological distress (anxiety and depression) was evident among internally displaced person than non-displaced persons. An experiment conducted by Akhunzada, Qadir, Maqsood, Rasool and Raza Ur Rehman (2015) was also in support of this finding. They found out that psychological distress (depression

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and anxiety) were high case groups exposed to traumatic experience compared to the control group who doesn't any traumatic related experience. From the above empirical review, it can be established that the psychological wellbeing of internally displaced persons are affected by exposure to traumatic condition which increases their chances of being diagnosed with posttraumatic disorder likewise causes them to experience some psychological distress like emotional detachment, anxiety, depression amongst others. The finding of the study supports the cognitive theory of psychopathologies in that individual's perception, beliefs and thinking pattern can determine whether the person will be psychologically distressed, or faced with trauma related disorder as well as determining the period at which such an individual grows out of the traumatic situation. According to cognitive theorists, they hold the assertion that individual's behaviour is affected by his/her thought pattern, belief system and perception of his/her immediate environment or situation he/she is faced with. Therefore, it becomes said that the development of posttraumatic stress disorder, psychological distress such as anxiety, depression and posttraumatic growth by victims of violence is as a result of their perception and thought pattern about their conditions. The second hypothesis which stated that there will be significant influence of sex and marital status on psychological wellbeing of the IDPs in Makurdi was rejected. The findings contradict Oginyi, Mbam and James (2017) who found out that married IDPs were more distressed, anxious and showed more social dysfunction compared to single ones but reported that single ones show more avoidance symptoms. The finding was also against Mark's (1996) findings that gender and marital satisfaction interact to predict individual psychological wellbeing. The result also contradicts Hamid and Musa (2010) who found out that significant influence of gender and marital status on mental health and psychological wellbeing among internally displaced persons. This study also contradicts the findings of Sheikh et al (2014) who found significant difference between male and female IDPs and that females are higher on internalizing and lower on psychological wellbeing.

### **CONCLUSION**

Conclusively, the study examined the influence of posttraumatic stress disorder, psychological distress and posttraumatic growth on psychological wellbeing among internally displaced persons in Makurdi, Benue State using purposive sampling techniques to select 126 participants with the inclusion criteria of being 6 years above and must have met the DSM-5 diagnostic criteria of PTSD. The finding revealed that there was significant independent influence of PTSD, psychological distress and PTG on psychological wellbeing of IDPs in Makurdi, Benue State. The predictor variables accounted for 10.0% of the total variation on psychological wellbeing, no significant influence was established between posttraumatic stress disorders and psychological wellbeing but there was significant influence of psychological distress and posttraumatic growth on psychological wellbeing among the IDPs. Also using psychological distress as a mediator shows that posttraumatic stress disorder directly influences psychological distress and indirectly through psychological distress influences psychological wellbeing among IDPs in Makurdi. Likewise there was no significant main and interaction influence of sex and marital satisfaction on psychological wellbeing among the IDPs. Thereafter, the findings were compared with the findings of other researchers which showed most of the findings were in consonance with the findings of other researchers. Therefore, psychosocial intervention should be provided by mental health professionals and sufficient support should be provided by the government, agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations and other private organizations so as to diminish the negative effect of psychological distress faced by the IDPs and enhance or improve their mental health and psychological wellbeing.

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***Acknowledgements***

My appreciation goes to all the participants, research assistants and Institute of Research for Africa for their financial support in completing this research work.

***Conflict of Interest***

The author declared no conflict of interests.

**How to cite this article:** T E Ojo (2019). Influence of PTSD, psychological distress and posttraumatic growth on psychological wellbeing among internally displaced persons in Makurdi, Benue State. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 7(4), 55-63. DIP:18.01.007/20190704, DOI:10.25215/0704.007