

Psychological Distress among Internal Displaced Persons in Baghdad City

الضيق النفسي لدى الاشخاص النازحين داخليا في مدينة بغداد

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الخلاصة

خلفية البحث: على الصعيد العالمي، أكثر من 40 مليون شخص نزح نتيجة الحروب والعنف بسبب النزاعات الدينية والعرقية في عام 2015، بينما 19.2 مليون شخص بسبب الكوارث الطبيعية مثل المجاعة والفيضانات. في العراق، نزح 4 مليون شخص بسبب العمليات العسكرية والعنف الإرهابي. ولهذه الأحداث أثر سلبي محتمل على صحة هؤلاء السكان.

الهدف: تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى تقييم آثار النزوح الداخلي على الصحة النفسية لدى النازحين. وتهدف أيضا إلى تحديد الخصائص الاجتماعية والديموغرافية للنازحين، مثل العمر والجنس ومستوى التعليم والدخل الشهري وفترة النزوح والعلاقة بينهما بمستوى الضيق النفسي.

المنهجية: أجريت دراسة وصفية تحليلية للفترة من 1 / تشرين الأول / 2014 حتى 15 / كانون الثاني / 2015 للتحقق من الضيق النفسي لدى النازحين الذين يعيشون في مخيمات النزوح. تم إجراء عينة البحث على (110) نازح تتراوح أعمارهم بين 20 إلى أكثر من 50 سنة والذين يعيشون في مخيمات النزوح في مدينة بغداد، حيث تم اختيارهم بالاعتماد على الطريقة المتعددة من خلال التقنية العشوائية المنظمة. تم تصميم الاستبانة من قبل الباحثين لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة، والتي تتكون من جزأين. وشمل كلا الجزأين المعلومات والخصائص الديموغرافية ومقياس الضيق النفسي. وقدر مجموع عدد بنود الاستبيان (17) بند. وتم تحديد صلاحية صدق الاستبانة من خلال الدراسة الاستقرائية. ومن ناحية أخرى، تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام طريقة التحليل الإحصائي الوصفي والاستنتاجي، والتي شملت التكرار، والتردد، والنسبة المئوية، والمتوسط الحسابي، وعلاقة معامل بيرسون ومربع كاي.

النتائج: أظهرت النتائج أن غالبية النازحين هم من الذكور و يبلغون من العمر 50 سنة فأكثر، ومعظمهم من الأشخاص الذين حصلوا على التعليم الابتدائي ويكتفون إلى حد ما في مستوى الدخل ونوع الأسرة نووية، و الغالبية العظمى هم من الأشخاص الذين كان لديهم وظيفة قبل النزوح. ويشهد الأشخاص النازحون مستوى متوسط من الضيق النفسي. وقد تم تحديد تأثير الجنس، مستوى التعليم، الدخل الشهري، ونوع الأسرة على الصحة النفسية. وهناك علاقات ذات دلالة معنوية بين الضيق النفسي، العمر، مستوى التعليم، المهنة، الدخل الشهري وفترة النزوح.

الاستنتاج: يشكل النزوح الداخلي مشكلة بارزة في العديد من البلدان النامية والديمقراطية الناشئة مثل العراق. وقد أشارت النتيجة إلى أن النزوح الداخلي قد يكون مرتبطا بتزايد مشاكل الصحة النفسية الداخلية.

التوصيات: ويوصي الباحثون بأهمية خاصة لتحديد الحقوق والضمانات ذات الصلة بحماية النازحين. ومن المرجح أن يركز ذلك الاهتمام ويقدم المساعدة التي تشتد الحاجة إليها من أجل إعادة توطين هؤلاء الأشخاص في بلدانهم وإعادة إدماجهم في المستقبل.

Abstract

Background: Globally, over 40 million people were displaced as a result of wars and violence due to religious and ethnic conflicts in 2015 while 19.2 million were displaced by natural disasters such as famine and floods. In Iraq, 4 million people were displaced by military process and terrorist violence. These events have potentially negative impact on the health of these populations.

Objectives: The present study aims to assess the effects of internal displacement on the mental health among displaced persons. It also aims to determine the social and demographic characteristics of the displaced persons, such as in age, gender, level of education, monthly income and duration of displacement their relationship to the level of psychological distress.

Methodology: A descriptive analytical study was conducted from 1/October /2014 until 15/January/2015 to realize the psychological distress of the displaced persons who were living in displacement camps. The research sample was conducted on (110) displaced persons, the ages ranging was from 20 to more than 50 years old who are living in displacement camps in Baghdad city, As they were chosen by depending on an intentional method by systematic random technique. Questionnaire was designed by the researchers for achieving the objectives of the study, which consisted of two parts; included both parts the combined information and demographic characteristics and psychological distress scale. Total of items of the questionnaire was estimated (17) items. Determination of the stability of the validity for the resolution was done through the inductive study. On other hand, data were analyzed by descriptive statistical and deductive analysis method, which included redundancy, frequency, percentage, mean and the coefficient correlation of Pearson and chi square.

Results: The results indicated that the majority of the displaced persons were male and aged 50 and more years old, most of them persons who had primary level of education and have somewhat sufficient in income level and family type is unclear, the vast majority of persons who were had a job before displacement. The persons with internal displacement had significantly moderate level of psychological distress. A significant effect has been found of gender, level of education, monthly income, and family type on mental health. There are significant relationships between psychological distress and age, level of education, occupation, monthly income and duration of displacement variables.

Conclusions: Internal displacement and is a prominent problem within many developing countries and emerging democracies such as Iraq. Our results suggested that internal displacement might be related to higher internalization mental health problems .

Recommendations: The researchers recommend is especially important to identify rights and guarantees relevant to the protection of displaced persons. This is likely to focus attention and provide much needed assistance for the appropriate resettlement and future reintegration of those persons within their countries.

Keywords: Iraq, Health problems, internally displaced persons .

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INTRODUCTION

Conflicts and disasters often cause large-scale displacement of people due to destruction of homes and environment, religious or political persecution or economic necessity ⁽¹⁾. These internally displaced persons (IDPs) are 'persons or groups of people who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflicts, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border' ⁽²⁾. They are distinct from refugees who are displaced outside their national borders. Furthermore, IDPs are often more disadvantaged than refugees because they do not benefit from assistance provided by international agencies unless the national government requests such assistance ⁽¹⁾⁽³⁾.

Global estimates indicate that the number of people displaced annually by conflict and violence has increased since 2003 ⁽⁴⁾. On the average, 5.2 million have been displaced annually in the past 13 years due to insurgency, political instability and terrorist activities of groups such as ISIS, particularly in the Middle East. As of December 2015, the global estimate of IDPs due to the conflict was 40.8 million ⁽⁴⁾. Three-quarters of these IDPs reside in ten countries of the world, and one of these is located in mid and north Iraq cities. The total number of people displaced by conflict in the region is almost 4 million ⁽⁴⁾⁽⁵⁾.

Apart from conflicts and violence, natural disasters resulting from floods, storms, wildfire, earthquakes and droughts have caused the displacement of 203.4 million people globally in the past 8 years. In 2015, 19.2 million people in 113 countries were displaced by natural disasters ⁽⁴⁾. Internal displacement persons, particularly those affected by conflict, are at a high risk of mental health problems. The commonly reported psychological reactions are post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSDs) in reaction to violence and depression as a reaction to loss ⁽⁶⁾⁽⁷⁾⁽⁸⁾. Other types of mental health problems which have been reported are panic attacks and anxiety disorders ⁽⁹⁾. The psychological distress occurring in the post-conflict environment also contributes to harmful health behaviors such as hazardous drinking and increased smoking. These behaviors are linked to an increased burden of non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and cancers ⁽¹⁰⁾. There are many studies were investigated the effects of internal displacement on the mental health and explored the factors associated with poor mental and physical health status of IDPs ⁽¹¹⁾⁽¹²⁾.

In this study we investigated the effects of internal displacement on the mental health of persons. Our aim was also to evaluate the effects of internal displacement on the emotional and behavioral problems by controlling for the effects of possible confounders like the person's age, gender, monthly income and duration of displacement.

AIMS OF STUDY:

1. To examine the effects of internal displacement on the mental health of persons.
2. To find out the association between socio-demographic variables and Psychological distress of displacement persons.

METHODOLOGY

The study is analytic descriptive in its nature correlational. It is descriptive since it attempts to examine the effects of internal displacement on the mental health and to assess the level of Psychological distress among displacement persons. Also since it correlates the dependent variable of psychological distress with some selected independent variables such as age, sex, educational level, monthly income, family type and duration of displacement of those populations.

The study was conducted in Baghdad, capital city of Iraq. For the quantitative survey, the target population consists of internal displacement persons living in displacement camp.

There are many displacement camps in Baghdad sector (Kirkuk and Rusaffa) which would enable the selection of displacement persons. The displacement persons were selected using systematic random sampling technique (110) were taken as a sample.

The respondents were asked to provide information regarding their age, gender educational level, occupation, monthly income, family type and duration of displacement. In order to assess the psychological distress of the respondents the researcher employed the Beusenberg and Orley (1994)⁽¹³⁾ Psychological distress questionnaire medium form which consists of 17 questions the test retest reliability of the questionnaire ranges from 0.81 to 0.85 and the internal consistency ranged from 0.87 to 0.90. Individual indicated their response on 3 point liker-type scale (always, sometimes and never), which higher scores on each scale indicating greater distress.

Participant in the sampled households had the study's purposes explained, major questions to be asked, their rights, confidentiality of their identity and responses. After obtaining informed consent from the displacement persons, the standardized questionnaires which include demographic and psychological distress variables were administered to the sample displacement persons and use semi-structured interview technique to collect data. The duration of the interviews oscillated between 10 to 15 minutes.

A descriptive statistical measure mean, frequency and percentage were used to see general pattern of psychological distress of the respondents and sex, age, monthly income, duration of displacement and educational level.

Chi square was computed to provide information whether there are significant relationship between psychological distress and socio-demographic characteristics of IDPs. In addition, simple linear regression was applied to identify the effect of socio-demographic characteristics on mental health of IDPs.

RESULTS:

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Displaced Persons

No.	Characteristics	f	%
1	Age group:	20 – 29 year	11.8
		30 – 39 year	26.4
		40 – 49 year	21.8
		50 ≤ year	40
		Total	110
2	Gender:	Male	82.7
		Female	17.3
		Total	110
3	Level of Education:	Doesn't read & write	4.5
		Read & write	2.7
		Primary school	50
		Intermediate school	16.4

		Secondary school	20	18.2
		Institute/college	9	8.1
		Total	110	100
4	Occupation before displacement:	Doesn't work	16	14.5
		Work	94	85.5
		Total	110	100
5	Monthly income:	Insufficient	38	34.5
		Barely sufficient	51	46.4
		Sufficient	21	19.1
		Total	110	100
6	Family type:	Nuclear	69	62.7
		Extended	41	37.3
		Total	110	100
7	Duration of Displacement:	≤ 3 weeks	50	45.6
		$4 \leq$ weeks	60	54.4
		Total	110	100

No: Number, F: Frequency, %: Percentage

The analysis of this table shows that highest percentage among displaced persons is represented by age group of $50 \leq$ years (40%), who were male (82.7%). Half of them are graduated from primary school (50%). Regarding occupation before displacement, more of them were having a job (85.5%). 46.4 % of displaced persons are barely sufficient with their monthly income (46.4%). 62.7% of them were live in a nuclear type of family (59.1%). Regarding duration of displacement, more than half of sample is displaced for more than 4 weeks duration (54.4%).

Table 2: Psychological Distress among Displaced Persons

Levels of Psychological Distress	F	%	M.S
Mild	42	38.2	1.67
Moderate	62	56.5	
Severe	6	5.5	
Total	110	100	

No: Number, F: Frequency, %: Percentage, M.S: Mean of score

This table reveals that displaced persons are experiencing a moderate level of psychological distress (56.5%).

Table 3: Simple Linear Regression for Effect of Socio-demographic Characteristics on IDPs' Mental Health (N=110)

Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Age	0.77	0.515	0.134	1.487	0.140
Gender	-4.060	1.678	-0.253	-2.420	0.017
Duration of displacement	0.698	0.573	0.107	1.219	0.226
Level of education	1.114	0.427	0.242	2.610	0.020

Occupation before displacement	3.488	1.946	0.203	1.793	0.076
Monthly income	2.152	0.799	0.254	2.694	0.018
Family type	-2.246	1.109	-0.179	-2.026	0.045

Dependent Variable: Psychological Distress

The findings in this table indicates that there is significant effect of gender, level of education, monthly income, and family type on mental health of internally displaced persons at p-value= 0.05 (p-value=0.017, 0.020, 0.018, and 0.045).

Table 4: Relationship between Socio-demographic Characteristics and Psychological Distress among Displaced Persons (N=110)

Distress Characteristics	Chi-square	DF	P-Value	Significance
Age group	99.542	6	0.009	S
Gender	23.858	2	0.412	N.S
Level of Education	397.714	10	0.001	H.S
Occupation before displacement	46.357	2	0.003	S
Monthly income	82.801	4	0.001	H.S
Duration of displacement	141.675	4	0.046	S
Family type	33.687	2	0.070	N.S

This table shows that there is significant relationship regarding psychological distress with age group, occupation, and duration of displacement at p-value ≤ 0.05 , while, there is high significant relationship regarding psychological distress with level of education and monthly income at p-value ≤ 0.001 . And no significant relationship is seen regarding psychological distress with gender and family type among displaced persons.

DISCUSSION

According to the findings in table (1), it has been shown that males with age group more than 50 years were highly frequent among the sample. The results of the study explain that most of the young people were involved in defending their areas of residence against the terrorists and the remaining are displaced whom children, women and the elderly. With regard to gender, the most recent IDP reports indicate that women are the most displaced and migrant⁽¹⁴⁾, but in Iraq we attribute this finding to the fact that most women were captured by terrorist organizations, in addition to their poor participation in the study. The findings of this study were not depicted with a study of Jubba Land Refugee and Internally Displaced Person's Agency (2016) that found a high percentage is female and young with age 37 years old⁽¹⁵⁾. Regarding level of education, half of displaced persons in the study were graduated from primary school. Most of displaced persons reporting that they are working and have occupation before their displacement; this finding may indicate that the majority of them were

form working class. A survey presented supportive evidence that found that the highest level of education was primary ⁽¹⁶⁾.

The finding also shows that about two third of the sample was lived in the urban areas; this clarify that the urban area are the most targeted by the terrorists. The highest percentage among displaced persons was associated with barely sufficient monthly income and most of them were having their own house before displacement. A survey assessment of public policies in 2006, in Colombia was done by UNHCR showed that security topics and hard access to economic and social rights are the major concerns for displaced persons. The Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation reported that the main problems for displaced person are represented by access to land, housing and occupation. The average monthly income of displaced persons is below the average of national income ⁽¹⁷⁾. The families of displaced person were nuclear and composed of 5-8 members. Regarding the duration of displacement, more than half of sample reveals that they displaced for more than four weeks period. In view of the time of data collection for these researches with the escalation of military operations in the hot areas, taking into account that the control of the areas by the terrorist was gradual, which led to displacing of families to the rest of the regions.

The finding in table (2) shows those displaced people are showing a mild to moderate level of psychological distress related to their displacement. This finding serves the hypothesis of the researchers that the exposure of these people to direct violence will later lead to the emergence of symptoms of psychological distress, which is affected by many factors, including lack of access to health services, lack of access to the house, low socioeconomic level and lack of the availability of appropriate environment. Studies reported that internally displaced persons are showing mental health problems at high risk due to their influence by conflict. The post-traumatic stress disorders are more commonly reported psychological reactions to violence and depression related to loss ^{(6) (7) and (8)}. In the post-conflict environment, the psychological distress is occurs that contributes to unhealthy behaviors like smoking; these unhealthy behaviors are associated with medical conditions such as hypertension and chronic diseases ⁽¹⁰⁾.

A study presented supportive evidence that found Hamid and Musa ⁽¹⁸⁾ the intentionally displaced persons are experiencing general psychological stress in addition to many mental health problems. Also in findings in table (3) indicates that there is significant effect of gender, level of education, monthly income, and family type on mental health of internally displaced persons. This result is consistent with the study of Min et al., ⁽¹⁹⁾ who found a main effect for gender, income and education was significant in that the mean psychological distress scores. In regarding of family type was significant predictor of psychological distress the researchers' attributes this result a family is a primary source of support this support present in extended rather than nuclear family as the result of the current study regarding the family type is therefore nuclear was associated with increases in depression, anxiety and other psychological problems.

Regarding findings in table (4), it has been seen that there is significant relationship between psychological distress and age of displaced persons while gender was not significantly related with psychological distress. This finding may be interpreted that Psychological distress is increasing with age due to life experiences and burdens of responsibility to care for their families. As a result of these burdens, they suffer from the psychological distress of their weak ability to provide their families. While the gender finding may be due to sample representation related to this study in which the majority was male. A study presented supportive evidence that found Al-Hadrawy ⁽²⁰⁾.

The level of education for displaced person was associated with psychological distress with high significant. Since the ratio of the sample is mostly represented the people who have

received primary education, we see that the level of psychological distress has increased by increasing the level of education because educated is worry more than non-educated, then will feel with psychological distress. A supportive evidenced has been presented by a study that found Noori and Janet ⁽²⁰⁾ the highest level of psychological disturbance based on the level of education. Concerning the occupation, a significant relationship has seen between psychological distress and occupation. This may be interpreted that persons are more distressed because they left their occupation that have before displacement. This finding was approved by Raza ⁽²¹⁾ and also by John ⁽²²⁾. A high significant relationship between psychological distress and monthly income has been reported. Monthly income is related to socio-economic factor, the displaced people are psychologically distressed due to their lack of monthly income resources availability. A study presented supportive evidence that found the poor socioeconomic status is associated with various psychological problems ⁽²³⁾.

The duration of displacement was significantly associated with psychological distress. This finding may explained by short period of displacement from their regions and exposure to violent works. A study presented supportive evidence that found Susan and others ⁽²⁴⁾. The family type was not significantly related with psychological distress, this may be due to more than half of families in the study were nuclear; we hypothesized that extended families are highly distressed, so this finding is not depicted with our hypothesis.

CONCLUSIONS

Internal displacement is a prominent problem within many developing countries and emerging democracies such as Iraq. Our results suggested that internal displacement might be related to higher internalization mental health problems. The present study found the gender, level of education, monthly income, and family type was a significant predictor of increases in psychological distress. Also the current study suggested there are many variables are related with internalized displacement problems such as age, monthly income and duration of displacement.

RECOMMENDATION

Further studies are needed to address the specific needs of internally displacement on affected individuals worldwide. This is especially important to identify rights and guarantees relevant to the protection of displaced persons. This is likely to focus attention and provide much needed assistance and social support of these persons within their countries.

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