

Forced Displacement Associated Adjustment Issues among the Middle-Aged Population: A Comparative Study

Lakshmeesha Bhat^{1*} Dr. R. Gopalakrishna²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Bangalore University, Jnana Bharathi, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560056, India

² Professor (Retd), Department of Psychology, Bangalore University, Jnana Bharathi, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560056, India

Abstract – Development induced displacement often leads to maladjustment and decline of livelihood among the affected communities. The purpose of the present research is to study the impact of forced displacement and associated adjustment issues among middle-aged population in Shivamogga district located in the state of Karnataka. The sample consisted of 120 respondents, including 60 displaced and 60 non-displaced participants between 45-65 years. Semi-structured interview and Shamshad-Jasbir old age adjustment inventory was administered and results were analyzed. The study showed that there is a statistically significant lower mean in total adjustment score among the displaced people, suggesting poor adjustment to forced displacement. Importantly, the results of the study indicated that displaced population had significantly poor social and emotional adjustment, relative to the non-displaced people. We conclude that resettlement and rehabilitation programs should work together along with the local community, instead of providing mere compensation to ensure positive social and emotional outcomes for displaced populations.

Keywords – Development-Induced Displacement, Resettlement, Social, Emotional, Adjustment

-----X-----

INTRODUCTION

Middle age is a period of many transitions. Changing roles in family, occupation and workplace, responsibilities of raising children and taking care of parents and elderly, coping with death or separation of parents and spouse, chronic illness and decreased working ability, preparation to retirements, uselessness and midlife crises are important stress factors associated with middle aged individuals (1). In addition to this, displacement may become a major aggravating stress factor that could be very challenging to face at this point of life (2). The effect of traumatization due to forced displacement among middle aged is a neglected topic in research and most researchers however agree on the fact that the middle-aged population is possibly the most vulnerable group who face many risks to their well-being due to consequences of forced displacement and factors associated, and are at a great risk of developing depression and other emotional problems (3). The present study therefore is an attempt to assess the impact of development projects on socio-cultural effect and life of middle aged people. It also investigates the problems of displacement that

creates maladjustment with new environment and might lead to mental health and social problems.

Developmental projects such as constructions of dams and large industries force large numbers of people, especially from the rural, tribal, and agrarian communities, to be permanently displaced from their native settlements. They are at constant and continuous risk of losing their forest, land, house, source of livelihood, environment and even their cultural identity (4-6). Currently, as per the available research literature, there are very few scientific studies conducted in the state of Karnataka to show psychological preparedness and to evaluate the well-being of the displaced population from developmental projects. Hence, the present research effort focuses on the study of effects of developmental projects on the middle-aged population, with regard to their adjustment, psychological well-being and mental health. Both positive and negative consequences of impact of displacement are evaluated by observing the pattern of changing lifestyle and quality of life. The shortcomings of developmental programs are discussed, which can be utilized to get fruitful

results for future resettlement and rehabilitation programs of the displaced population and development of under privileged sections of the population.

METHODOLOGY

Aim and Objectives:

The aim of the study is to assess forced displacement associated adjustment issues with middle-aged displaced and non-displaced population in the Shivamogga district of Karnataka state. The objectives of the study are to assess adjustment in six major areas, including health, home, social, marital, emotional, and financial dimensions and to assess the effect of forced displacement in the above-mentioned areas.

Operational definitions:

The chronological age of the person, who is in the age group between 45-65 years is considered as middle-aged in the present study. Adjustment is defined as the process by which an individual maintains equilibrium among their various needs or between their needs and the circumstances that influence the fulfilment of their needs. Finally, the quality of life is defined as individual's perceptions of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their temperament, honesty, integrity and their culture.

Study population:

Purposive sampling was used for data collection. Study participants were from geographical areas of Varahi Yojana, a hydro-electric project in Theertha Halli Taluk and Sharavathi Hydro-Electric project in Sagara Taluk Linganamakki Dam in Shivamogga district of Karnataka state. The sample consisting of 60 displaced and 60 non-displaced individuals were interviewed, and data was collected.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria:

Displaced population included people in the age group between 45-65 years, who were forced to migrate from their permanent place of residence for developmental projects. People who are in their permanent place of residence and those from other age groups were excluded from the study. Non-displaced population included people in the age group between 45-65 years, who are inhabitants of their permanent place since their birth and reside near place of developmental projects. People who are not inhabitants of their permanent place since their birth were excluded from the study.

Research Tools:

1. Semi structured interview schedule

Semi structured interview schedule was designed to gather information regarding economic status, family adjustment, social support, and other important details for the present study.

2. Shamshad-Jasbir Old age Adjustment Inventory

The questionnaire developed by Shamshad Hussain and Jasbir Kaur (1995) consisted of 125 statements that assesses the level of adjustment in six major areas, including health, home, social, marital, emotional and financial, with higher scores indicating better adjustment. The inventory has shown good reliability and validity for use in the middle-aged and older adults in the Indian population (7-9).

Study design:

Data are collected by face-to-face interviews involving the researcher approaching study participants individually to collect demographic details and other required information using the semi structured interview schedule. The old age adjustment inventory was administered to study participants along with clear instructions. After confirming that the informants have clearly understood the purpose and design of the study, the researcher allowed the participants to fill their responses in the space provided. Scores obtained were then computed, compared, analyzed and interpreted with the help of appropriate statistical method.

Statistical analysis:

Data was presented with the help of descriptive statistics focusing on mean and standard deviation. All data were analyzed statistically by Student's *t* test to determine if there is a significant difference in the means of the two sample groups and disprove the null hypothesis. A *p*-value less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Table 1: Scores on the adjustment inventory for displaced and non-displaced middle-aged population

Displaced and non-displaced population	Size	Mean	SD	t test	Level of significance
<i>Health adjustment</i>					
Displaced	60	20.86	2.00		
Non-displaced	60	21.50	2.40	1.28	NS
<i>Home adjustment</i>					
Displaced	60	20.45	2.78		
Non-displaced	60	21.07	2.42	1.54	NS
<i>Social adjustment</i>					
Displaced	60	12.25	3.43	13.05	Sig **
Non-displaced	60	18.76	1.69		
<i>Marital adjustment</i>					
Displaced	60	13.90	1.65	0.99	NS
Non-displaced	60	14.11	1.33		
<i>Emotional adjustment</i>					
Displaced	60	11.56	3.22	14.28	Sig**
Non-displaced	60	18.33	1.50		
<i>Financial adjustment</i>					
Displaced	60	10.63	1.73	9.29	Sig **
Non-displaced	60	11.26	1.31		
<i>Total adjustment</i>					
Displaced	60	89.66	9.51		
Non-displaced	60	105.05	5.35	10.62	Sig **

Abbreviations: SD=Standard deviation; NS=Not significant; Sig **=Significant at 0.01 level

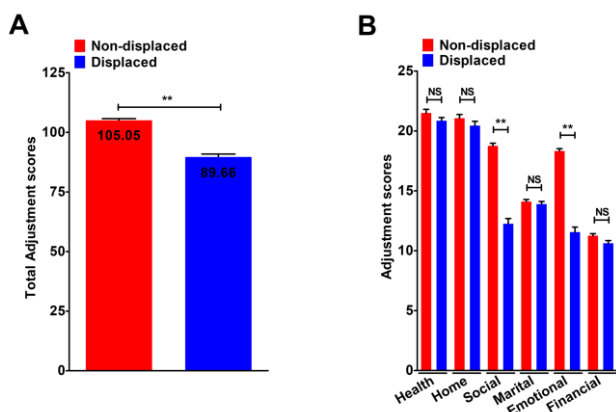


Figure 1: A. Bar-graph depicting total mean adjustment scores between displaced ($n=60$) and non-displaced ($n=60$) population. Note significantly lower total adjustment scores in the displaced population, suggesting overall poor adjustment to forced displacement. **B.** Bar-graph depicting the level of adjustment in six major areas, including health, home, social, marital, emotional and financial, between displaced and non-displaced population. Note strikingly poor social and emotional adjustment among displaced population. **, $p<0.01$. NS, not significant. Error bars, S. E.

RESULTS

In the present study, we have compared the level of adjustment in six major areas, i.e., health, home, social, marital, emotional, and financial, between middle-aged displaced and non-displaced population. The study included participants from

geographical areas of Varahi Yojana, a hydro-electric project in Theertha Halli Taluk and Sharavathi Hydro-Electric project in Sagara Taluk Linganamakki Dam in Shivamogga district of Karnataka state. The sample consisted of 60 displaced and 60 non-displaced participants between 45-65 years. Semi-structured interview and Shamshad-Jasbir old age adjustment inventory was administered and results were analyzed. Overall mean scores for adjustment was significantly lower for the displaced people when compared to non-displaced group (Displaced: 89.66 ± 9.51 ; $n=60$, Non-displaced: 105.05 ± 5.35 ; $n=60$; Student's t test; $p<0.01$), suggesting poor adjustment to forced displacement (Table 1 and Figure 1A).

Importantly, our detailed analysis of the adjustment across six major areas which includes health, home, social, marital, emotional and financial, revealed that there was no positive impact in adjustment in the displacement population for any of these dimensions analyzed in our study, suggesting that displacement does not have a major helpful influence on quality of life of people (Table 1 and Figure 1B). Instead, the obtained results revealed that there is significantly lower adjustment between middle-aged displaced and non-displaced population across two key areas: emotional and social (Table 1 and Figure 1B). In the group of non-displaced individuals, overall mean score for social and emotional adjustment was 18.76 ± 1.69 and 18.33 ± 1.50 , respectively. In the group of displaced individuals, these scores were 12.25 ± 3.43 and 11.56 ± 3.22 , respectively (Displaced: $n=60$, Non-displaced: $n=60$; Student's t test; $p<0.01$). No difference in adjustment scores were observed across other four areas, including health, home, marital, and financial dimensions (Table 1 and Figure 1B). Intriguingly, contrast to previous studies reporting improvement in financial status due to compensation-based resettlement programs (10), we observed no significant gain in financial adjustment among displaced individuals. Taken together, our study revealed that forced displacement play a critical role in mental health of people and their adjustment with the new environment.

Emotional adjustment is a process by which individual achieves emotional stability that includes good mental health and personal life satisfaction. Social adjustment is the mechanism which the relationships between persons, groups and cultural elements are established on a mutually beneficial and satisfactory basis (11). The results of our study indicated that the displaced population had significantly poor emotional and social adjustment compared to the non-displaced population. This study is therefore unique, and our results can be applied to improve the mental health of displaced population and quality of resettlement and rehabilitation programs.

DISCUSSION

The basic assumption in the theory of adjustment is that every individual seeks to achieve and maintain a positive relationship with their environment (11). Proper adjustment is an important factor in determining an individual's overall physical and mental health and wellbeing (12). Displacement is a very stressful process. Displaced populations take many years to readjust with the new life style and the new environment (6, 12). In this study, a comparison of adjustment between displaced and non-displaced populations was made and data is presented. Interestingly, our study showed that, although physical health, home, financial and marital quality did not change significantly, displaced population showed significantly poor emotional and social adjustment. These findings indicate that there is a great need to address the psycho-social aspects of the displaced population. The government and voluntary organizations should set up counseling centers and lend their support for the disadvantaged and efforts should be directed to improve the socio-emotional literacy and prepare people well in advance and to provide all basic needs, employment opportunities, access to social networks, integrating human rights, and continuous support for the resettled population (13-14).

Studies have shown that implementation of resettlement plans of the displaced population is very poor in the Indian scenario (15). Findings of the present study may indicate the shortcomings in policy making and planning resettlement programs for the displaced population in India. Further, the study throws light on the maladjustment of displaced population, and therefore, it is necessary to plan better facilities for developing good social support system, preparedness training, good health care and better living conditions by the district administration for the displaced people through concerned authorities. The outcome of the present study will be useful for the psychology and social researchers and policy makers to understand the psycho-social perspectives of the displaced population and planning the future resettlement and rehabilitation programs.

CONCLUSION

Development-induced resettlement generally ignores the multiple stressors of being removed from ancestral lands in the design and practice of resettlement. The present study has indicated that displaced population experience more difficulties, resulting in negative effects on their emotional and social adjustment. Therefore, special attention must be paid to improve their mental health status. We hope this study by facilitating better policy making and planning resettlement programs and support networks, reduce vulnerabilities and promote their well-being.

REFERENCES

1. Kruger A. (1994). The midlife transition: crisis or chimera. *Psychological Reports*; 75(3 Pt 1): pp. 1299-1305.
2. Porter M., Haslam N. (2001). Forced displacement in Yugoslavia: a meta-analysis of psychological consequences and their moderators. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*;14(4): pp. 817-834.
3. Gould R.L. (1972). The phases of adult life: a study in developmental psychology. *American Journal of Psychiatry*;129 (5): pp. 521-531.
4. Scudder T. (1993). Development-induced Relocation and Refugee Studies: 37 Years of Change and Continuity among Zambia's Gwembe Tonga. *Journal of Refugee Studies*; 6(2): pp. 123–152.
5. Patel S., Sliuzas R., Mathur N. (2015). The risk of impoverishment in urban development-induced displacement and resettlement in Ahmedabad. *Environment and Urbanization*; 27(1): pp. 231-256.
6. Lama M.P. (2000). Internal Displacement in India: Causes, Protection and Dilemmas. *Forced Migration Review*; 8: pp. 24-26.
7. Chauhan A.J. (2017). A Psychological Study of Adjustment among Institutionalized and Non-Institutionalized Senior Citizens. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*; 4(3): pp. 85-91.
8. Nema S., Bansal I. (2016). Comparative Study of Middle Age Male and Female Adjustment between Residents of Banasthali University Campus and Narsighpur Distict. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*; 6(3): pp. 511-513.
9. Nema S. (2013). Effect of marital adjustment in middle-aged adults. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*; 3(6): pp. 1-6.
10. Randell H. (2016). The short-term impacts of development-induced displacement on wealth and subjective well-being in the Brazilian Amazon. *World Development*; 87: pp. 385-400.
11. Vaezi M., Vala M., Souri M., Mousavi A., Ghavamzadeh A. (2016). Emotional, Social and Occupational Adjustment among Oncology Nurses. *International Journal of*

Hematology-oncology and Stem Cell Research; 10(4): pp. 195-199.

12. Fazel M., Reed R.V., Panter-Brick C., Stein A. (2012). Mental health of displaced and refugee children resettled in high-income countries: risk and protective factors. *Lancet*, 379 (9812): pp. 266-282.
13. Bowling A. (1994). Social networks and social support among older people and implications for emotional well-being and psychiatric morbidity. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 6(1): pp. 41-58.
14. Rajagopal B. (2000). *Human Rights and Development*. World Commission on Dams Submission.
15. Mahapatra L. K. (1999). Testing the Risks and Reconstruction Model on India's Resettlement Experiences. In: Cernea MM. (ed.), *The Economics of Involuntary Resettlement, Questions and Challenges*, The World Bank, Washington D.C., pp. 189-230.

Corresponding Author

Lakshmeesha Bhat*

Research Scholar, Department of Psychology,
Bangalore University, Jnana Bharathi, Bengaluru,
Karnataka 560056, India

E-Mail – lakshmeeshbhat@gmail.com