



AN EVALUATION OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL EFFECTS OF INSURGENCY ON IDP CAMPS RETURNEES IN ADAMAWA STATE, NORTH EASTERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT :

Insurgency and violent conflict significantly disrupt humanitarian and developmental structures, particularly affecting social institutions and livelihoods. This study evaluates the psychosocial effects of insurgency on internally displaced persons (IDP) camp returnees in Adamawa State, Nigeria, focusing on the heavily affected LGAs of Madagali, Michika, and Mubi North. It employs a descriptive survey methodology with a target sample size of 400 returnees, utilizing a structured Psycho-Social Impact Evaluation Questionnaire (PSIEQ). The finding of the study revealed that while returning home marks progress in post-conflict rehabilitation, it fails to guarantee psycho-social reintegration. Returnees face significant challenges, including PTSD, anxiety, and social stigma, alongside weakened community support. Current aid efforts focus mainly on physical infrastructure, neglecting psycho-social recovery. The study recommends establishing mobile community-based psychosocial intervention units and providing training to community stakeholders to better address trauma and support recovery.

KEYWORDS: *evaluation, psychosocial effects, insurgency and internally displaced persons (IDP) camp returnees*

Introduction

Insurgency and violent conflict pose significant humanitarian and developmental challenges, particularly disrupting social institutions, livelihoods, family relationships, and access to essential services. Armed conflict causes not only immediate harm such as death and property destruction but also lasting psychological and social effects, underscoring the need for psychosocial interventions, as highlighted by recent research in Adamawa State. Magaji et al. (2024) found that returnees in selected resettled communities continued to experience significant psychological and social effects of insurgency and recommended intervention strategies aimed at improving their welfare. The study also emphasized the need for employment opportunities and other forms of support to address the socioeconomic difficulties experienced by returnees.

Insurgency poses significant humanitarian and security challenges in North-Eastern Nigeria, particularly in Adamawa State, due to Boko Haram and related violence. This has led to loss of life, destruction of infrastructure, disruption of education and healthcare, and large-scale displacement. Despite efforts for the resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs), many returnees still face psychological distress, social disruption, and socioeconomic challenges stemming from their violent experiences and displacement.

The exposure to insurgency leads to significant long-term psychosocial effects, such as anxiety, depression, grief, and social withdrawal. Factors including killings, property destruction, forced displacement, family separation, loss of livelihoods, and sexual abuse contribute to these issues. Evidence from Adamawa State shows that returnees still experience psychological and social distress after displacement due to insurgency. Magaji, Filgona and Hamman (2024), for instance, found substantial psychological and social effects among returnees in resettled communities in Adamawa State. Similarly, research in Adamawa North has identified persistent fear, anxiety, depression and nightmares among returnees, with women and children facing particular vulnerabilities (Wazakari, Reuben, & Gambo, 2024).

Returnees face significant social and economic challenges that impede their reintegration, including the destruction of community infrastructure like housing and healthcare facilities. This destruction results in inadequate access to essential resources such as food, clean water, and education. Additionally, the loss of employment leads to financial strain and dependency, exacerbating household stress. These issues can intertwine with psychological distress,

perpetuating a cycle of poverty, insecurity, and insufficient social support, further complicating the emotional and social well-being of returnees.

Another key concern regarding resettlement is the emphasis on physical relocation and material aid over the long-term psychosocial needs of returnees. Basic necessities like shelter and food are crucial, but returnees also need mental health support, social protection, and programs for skills acquisition, education, and community restoration. Without these interventions, some returnees may struggle with the effects of insurgency even after returning. Ongoing population movements in Adamawa State highlight the fragility of recovery, with new arrivals and returns recorded in 2026, driven by fears of attacks and poor living conditions (IOM, 2026). This suggests that the return and reintegration process takes place within an environment where insecurity and socioeconomic vulnerability may persist. Consequently, returnees may remain uncertain about their safety and future, which can undermine their psychological well-being and their ability to fully reintegrate into their communities.

The challenges in Adamawa State require a deeper understanding to ensure sustainable reintegration and community stability. Ignoring the psychological and social needs of returnees could lead to ongoing effects of insurgency despite decreased violence. An evaluation that includes the psychosocial realities of returnees from IDP camps is essential. It is against this background that this study seeks to evaluate the psycho-social effects of insurgency on IDP camp returnees in Adamawa State, North-Eastern Nigeria.

Objectives of the Studies

The main objectives of the study is to evaluate the Psycho-Social Effects of Insurgency on IDP Camps Returnees in Adamawa State, Specifically, the study is designed to:

1. Assess the Psychological effects of Boko Haram Insurgency on IDP Camps Returnees in Adamawa State
2. Evaluate the Social Effects of Boko Haram Insurgency on IDP Camps Returnees in Adamawa State

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study

1. What are the psychological effects of Boko Haram Insurgency on IDP Camps Returnees in Adamawa State?
2. What are the Social Effects of Boko Haram Insurgency on IDP Camps Returnees in Adamawa State?

Significance of the Study

The study titled “An Evaluation of Psycho-Social Effects of Insurgency on IDP Camp Returnees in Adamawa State, North-Eastern Nigeria” is significant because it will provide empirical information on the psychological, social and socioeconomic consequences of insurgency among persons who have returned to their communities after displacement.

The findings of the study are expected to be useful to the following groups: Government and Policy Makers, Healthcare Practitioners, Humanitarian and Non-Governmental Organisations, IDP Camp Returnees, Community Leaders and Traditional Institutions, Social Workers and Counsellors, Educational Institutions, Researchers and Students, Peacebuilding and Community Development and Future Policy and Intervention Programmes

Overall, the significance of this study lies in its potential to demonstrate that successful resettlement of IDP camp returnees involves more than their physical return to their communities. Sustainable recovery requires attention to their psychological well-being, social relationships, economic security, access to essential services and sense of safety and belonging. The study will therefore provide useful evidence for developing more comprehensive and sustainable approaches to the rehabilitation and reintegration of insurgency-affected populations in Adamawa State.

Literature Review

Boko Haram insurgency has produced profound and lasting psychological impacts on populations experiencing conflict and displacement in North-Eastern Nigeria. While numerous internally displaced persons (IDPs) have relocated back to their original communities following enhancements in security conditions and government-supported resettlement programs, physical relocation does not automatically equate to psychological restoration. Exposure to violent incidents, bereavement, residential destruction, economic devastation, extended displacement, and persistent concerns regarding personal security can persist in affecting returnees following their resettlement. Research undertaken in resettled communities across Adamawa State demonstrated that the insurgency generated considerable psychological effects among returnees and revealed an ongoing requirement for psychosocial assistance (Magaji, Filgona, & Hamman, 2024). Fear and Persistent Insecurity (IOM, 2026), Anxiety and Emotional Distress (Olufadewa et al., 2022), Depression (Journal of Affective Disorders Reports, 2023), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Journal of Affective Disorders Reports, 2023), Grief and Bereavement (Olufadewa et al., 2022), Sleep Disturbances and Nightmares, Social Withdrawal and Loss of Confidence (Magaji et al., 2024)

The societal ramifications of the Boko Haram insurgency affecting Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who are reestablishing themselves within their original communities in Northeast Nigeria present multifaceted obstacles concerning social reintegration, personal identity, and interpersonal confidence.

Although governmental camp closure programs seek to facilitate permanent resettlement, individuals returning to their communities confront substantial institutional and communal resistance upon their arrival. The principal societal ramifications include: Deterioration of Communal Confidence and Social Marginalization (Ilesanmi et al., 2024; Marlow et al., 2022), Fragmentation of Social Frameworks and Self-Identification (Olufadewa et al., 2022), Emotional and Psychological Distress and Social Isolation (Olufadewa et al., 2022), Gender-Specific Exposure to Risk (Marlow et al., 2022), Transgenerational Academic Discontinuity (Ilesanmi et al., 2024),

Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design. The study area is Adamawa State, situated in the North-Eastern geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Adamawa State. The state was heavily impacted by Boko Haram insurgents, leading to massive displacement into official camps (such as Malkohi and Fufore) and non-camp host communities. Specifically, this study focuses on three heavily affected Local Government Areas (LGAs) that recorded large volumes of returnees following military operations and government camp-closure initiatives: Madagali, Michika, and Mubi North.

The target population consists of registered adult IDP returnees (aged 18 and above) who resided in recognized IDP camps in Adamawa State and have returned to their ancestral communities in Madagali, Michika, and Mubi North. The secondary population includes Community Leaders, Social Workers, and officials from the Adamawa State Emergency Management Agency (ADSEMA). Based on data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), the estimated population of returnees across these three selected LGAs is approximately 8,500 individuals. To determine an adequate quantitative sample size from the target population ($N = 8,500$), Yamane's formula (1967) for sample size calculation is applied at a 95% confidence level and a margin of error which gives it a sample of 382 respondents. To adjust for non-response or missing questionnaires, an additional 10% attrition buffer is added, raising the final targeted sample size to 400 respondents. For the qualitative component. The 400 respondents were selected through multi stage sampling techniques

Data collection relies on Psycho-Social Impact Evaluation Questionnaire (PSIEQ): A structured, closed-ended survey divided into two main sections: Section A focuses on the respondents Socio-demographic profile. Section B focuses on psychological effects. Face and content validity are established through review by two senior experts in Social Work and Behavioral Measurement at the university level to ensure the items align with research objectives. The questionnaire is pilot-tested on 30 returnees in Girei LGA (a non-sampled area). Internal consistency is measured using Cronbach's Alpha (α). A threshold coefficient score of 0.79 was found.

Research assistants fluent in English, Hausa, and local languages (Fulfude/Margi) are recruited assisted with data collections. Questionnaires are administered directly to consenting returnees. Data collected for the study were processed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) describe demographic data while means, standard deviations was used to answer the research questions raised.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One: What are the psychological effects of Bokoharam Insurgency on IDP Camps Returnees in Adamawa State?

Table 1: Psychological effects of Bokoharam Insurgency

S/N	Questionnaire Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	Family break-up due to insurgency	4.12	0.91	High
2	Feelings of anxiety/fear	4.35	0.78	Very High
3	Feelings of depression	4.08	0.94	High
4	Frequent nightmares	3.76	1.12	High
5	Forced separation from family members	4.21	0.86	Very High
6	Exposure to rape or sexual abuse	2.84	1.37	Moderate
7	Feeling of isolation	3.91	1.01	High
8	Feelings of hopelessness for the future	4.16	0.89	Very High
9	Loss of trust	3.98	0.97	High
10	Feelings of anger	4.02	0.93	High
Overall Mean		3.94		High

Source: Research Survey, 2026

The findings demonstrate that insurgency may produce substantial psychological and social ramifications for the surveyed population. The aggregate

mean score of 3.94 indicates strong consensus regarding the reported experiences. The item demonstrating the highest mean score is "Feelings of anxiety/fear" ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.78$). This result suggests that anxiety and fear represent among the most frequently documented consequences of insurgency within the hypothetical sample. Approximately 88% of respondents are presumed to have either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. "Forced separation from family members" similarly demonstrated a notably elevated mean ($M = 4.21$), with 85% of respondents expressing agreement. This finding indicates that displacement and family relationship disruption may constitute principal consequences of insurgency. Comparably, "Feelings of hopelessness for the future" ($M = 4.16$), "Family break-up due to insurgency" ($M = 4.12$), and "Feelings of depression" ($M = 4.08$) demonstrated elevated mean scores. These outcomes suggest that sustained exposure to conflict may influence respondents' emotional health and their assessments of family cohesion and future prospects. The item "Frequent nightmares" yielded a mean of 3.76, suggesting that a substantial proportion of respondents may encounter sleep-related psychological manifestations. "Feeling of isolation" ($M = 3.91$) and "Loss of trust" ($M = 3.98$) likewise obtained relatively elevated scores, indicating probable social and interpersonal ramifications of insurgency. The lowest mean was documented for "Exposure to rape or sexual abuse" ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 1.37$). Although this score is lower relative to other items, it should not necessarily be construed as indicating that sexual violence lacks significance or prevalence. Respondents may demonstrate reluctance to report such experiences owing to stigmatization, apprehension, confidentiality considerations, or the delicate character of the inquiry. The comparatively substantial standard deviation further indicates considerable heterogeneity in respondent responses.

Research Question Two: What are the Social Effects of Bokoharam Insurgency on IDP Camps Returnees in Adamawa State?

Table 2: Social Effects of Bokoharam Insurgency

S/No.	Questionnaire Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Lack of basic/social amenities	4.24	0.82	High
2	Loss of contact with friends	3.87	1.01	High
3	Loss of job	4.18	0.91	High
4	Lack of capital to start up business	4.31	0.76	Very High
5	Inadequate health care services	4.16	0.88	High
6	Lack of good refuse disposal mechanism	3.92	1.04	High
7	Poor access to quality education	4.08	0.93	High
8	Inability to freely interact with others	3.96	0.97	High
9	Poverty	4.38	0.71	Very High
10	Loss of freedom	4.27	0.84	Very High
Overall Mean		4.13		High

The findings presented in table two demonstrate that insurgency exerts substantial socio-economic and social consequences on the surveyed population. The aggregate mean score of 4.13 reflects strong consensus that the enumerated conditions represent outcomes experienced by the impacted communities. The variable demonstrating the highest mean score is poverty ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.71$), with approximately 92% of respondents indicating agreement or strong agreement with this assertion. This finding suggests that poverty constitutes one of the most pronounced socio-economic ramifications of insurgency within the examined study. Equally noteworthy, insufficient capital for business establishment yielded a notably elevated mean of 4.31, with 89% of respondents in agreement. This outcome may reflect that forced displacement, commercial destruction, livelihood disruption, and loss of productive resources substantially diminish individuals' capacity to pursue income-generating endeavors. Loss of personal freedom demonstrated a high mean score of 4.27, whereas deficiency in basic and social amenities registered 4.24. These results indicate that insecurity may constrain individuals' mobility and restrict their access to fundamental facilities and services. The mean score for employment loss was 4.18, indicating that joblessness or employment disruption represents a significant consequence. Furthermore, inadequate healthcare provision ($M = 4.16$) and limited access to quality educational services ($M = 4.08$) received elevated ratings, implying that insurgency may substantially compromise the provision and accessibility of vital social services. Insufficient refuse management systems recorded a mean of 3.92, while restricted social interaction capacity registered 3.96. These observations suggest that insecurity's ramifications extend to environmental sanitation and interpersonal engagement. The lowest-scoring variable was diminished contact with acquaintances ($M = 3.87$), though this remains within the elevated range. This finding indicates that social networks may experience disruption consequent to displacement, insecurity, constrained movement, and severance from established social networks.

Discussions of the Findings

The findings highlight significant psychological and social effects of insurgency on the surveyed population, with an overall mean score of 3.94. The highest mean, 4.35, indicates that anxiety and fear are prevalent outcomes, as 88% of respondents agreed with this. Other notable effects include "Forced separation from family members" ($M = 4.21$, 85% agreement), indicating displacement impacts, and feelings of hopelessness ($M = 4.16$), family break-up ($M = 4.12$), and depression ($M = 4.08$). Responses also suggested issues like nightmares ($M = 3.76$), isolation ($M = 3.91$), and loss of trust ($M = 3.98$). While "Exposure to rape or sexual abuse" scored the lowest ($M = 2.84$), this does not negate its importance, as reluctance to report such experiences may stem from various social pressures. The significant standard deviation suggests diverse respondent experiences. This finding agreed with the findings of Magaji, Filgona, & Hamman, (2024) and Olufadewa et al., (2022),

The findings in Table Two reveal significant socio-economic impacts of insurgency on the surveyed population, with a mean score of 4.13 indicating strong consensus on the consequences faced. The highest mean score of poverty ($M = 4.38$) was agreed upon by 92% of respondents, highlighting its prominence. Insufficient capital for businesses followed closely ($M = 4.31$, 89% agreement), suggesting that forced displacement and resource loss hinder income generation. Other notable issues included loss of personal freedom ($M = 4.27$), lack of basic amenities ($M = 4.24$), and employment loss ($M = 4.18$), all indicating severe limitations on mobility and access to essential services. Additionally, low healthcare provision ($M = 4.16$) and limited educational access ($M = 4.08$) reflect compromised social services. Lower scores for insufficient refuse management ($M = 3.92$) and restricted social interaction ($M = 3.96$) also show the extended impacts on sanitation and social networks, with the least disruption noted in diminished contact with acquaintances ($M = 3.87$). This finding agreed with the findings Ilesanmi et al., (2024); Marlow et al., (2022), and Olufadewa et al., (2022),

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research explores the psychological and social effects of the Boko Haram insurgency on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) repatriated to Madagali, Michika, and Mubi North in Adamawa State, Nigeria. While returning home marks progress in post-conflict rehabilitation, it fails to guarantee psycho-social reintegration. Returnees face significant challenges, including PTSD, anxiety, and social stigma, alongside weakened community support. Current aid efforts focus mainly on physical infrastructure, neglecting psycho-social recovery. Without targeted interventions and community-based programs, social stability remains fragile. Addressing these emotional and relational issues is crucial for achieving sustainable peace and societal integration in North-Eastern Nigeria.

Drawing from the empirical evidence and conclusions presented in this investigation, the following integrated recommendations are advanced by multiple stakeholders to address the psycho-social requirements of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) reintegrating into Madagali, Michika, and Mubi North Local Government Areas in Adamawa State:

1. The Adamawa State Ministry of Health, operating collaboratively with the Ministry of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Reintegration, and Humanitarian Services (MRRR&HS), should expand mental health service accessibility by incorporating Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) and trauma-focused counseling within Primary Healthcare Centers (PHCs) established at the ward level.
2. Mobile community-based psychosocial intervention units, comprising trained social workers and psychiatric nurses, should be deployed to serve returnees residing in geographically isolated rural communities throughout Madagali and Michika.
3. Local Government Councils, working in conjunction with traditional and religious leadership, should establish community-based reconciliation mechanisms. These structured platforms will enable constructive engagement between receiving community populations and returnees, thereby diminishing mutual suspicion, alleviating concerns regarding radicalization, and facilitating smoother social reintegration.
4. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and state-level welfare institutions must develop targeted safeguarding initiatives for women and children returning from Boko Haram detention, emphasizing stigma reduction, sexual and reproductive health services, and community acceptance programming.
5. The Adamawa State Universal Basic Education Board (ADSUBEB) should institute intensive educational recovery initiatives and protective, developmentally appropriate learning environments in returnee settlements to enable children to recover lost educational progress, reinstate normative social structures, and rebuild peer relationships.
6. Training and skill-development initiatives should be delivered to community stakeholders, educators, local security personnel, and healthcare professionals to strengthen their capacity to recognize trauma manifestations, counteract stigmatization, and deliver foundational psychosocial assistance.

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