Peace Studies and Practice
Journal of the Society of Peace Studies and Practice

2021 Edition
Pp 13-25

Surviving against all Odds: Challenges of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria amid the Covid-19 pandemic

Anthony Abah Ebonyi, Ph.D, *mspsp*
APUDI Institute for Peace Studies and Social Rehabilitation (APIS)
University of Abuja, Nigeria
Email: ebonyiaab@gmail.com

Abstract
This study investigates challenges facing Internally Displaced Persons in New Kuchingoro camp, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, including their coping mechanisms amid the Covid-19 Pandemic. It adopts qualitative research design, and utilised purposive sampling techniques to select participants comprising one camp official, and two non-officials, male and female, aged 30 to 75. It conducts semi-structured, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with selected participants to elicit information relating to the study's objectives. The interviews were audio-recorded to capture every details, and later transcribed and reported verbatim. Findings reveal that New Kuchingoro IDPs, are being affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in three important areas, namely: psychological, physical, and economic; and adopt prayer, foot-ball game by both male and female youths, and group discussions, as coping mechanisms. Food items, clothes, and medications provided by compassionate individuals, form part of social support and coping mechanisms. The study concludes that the IDPs, though affected by the pandemic, continue to survive against all odds, hopeful that one day they would return to a peaceful and secured home. Since they cannot return home now due to ongoing insecurity, the study suggests that Government should disburse sufficient funds and monitor its spending, to mitigate IDPs vulnerabilities and improve their conditions.

Keywords: Camp, Covid-19 pandemic, internally displaced persons, surviving against all odds

1. Introduction

The quest for survival and security remains salient for persons displaced from their homes, and in the process losing valuables and exposed to colossal hardship, during which they experience challenges in terms of their rights and wellbeing (Onaedo, Samuel & John 2019; Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform [SSHAP], 2020). Exacerbating the perilous situation is the outbreak of the Coronavirus disease-19 that threatens livelihoods, and requires the observance of certain preventive measures as control against it spread (Ebonyi & Abok, 2020). The Covid-2019 pandemic of unparalleled variability continues to leave in its trail psycho-social, and economic consequences affecting large populations globally and locally. All segments of the population are vulnerable to contracting the virus. However, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are the most vulnerable to contracting the disease because of the deplorable living conditions in the camps. In these camps, the IDPs live in horrible circumstances, often neglected, stigmatised, and lacking access to food, shelter, clothing, health care services, education, and other basic necessities (Omosekejimi, et al., 2021).

In Nigeria, the Covid-19 outbreak exacerbates the already fragile security situation evident in the threats posed by terrorism activities and exemplified in Boko Haram insurgent attacks. The heinous activities of the terrorist group and other criminal groups, have displaced massive populations from their original habitation to dehumanizing locations where they are exposed to the vagaries of nature. The consequences are psycho-social and economic for the displaced persons, which might be described as double jeopardy as they "struggle to survive the impact of the conflict and the contagion at the same time" (Omosekejimi, et al., 2021). News of the emergence of the novel Coronavirus, in a small but busy business community of Wuhan, Hubei Province in China, in the closing days of December 2019 (Ebonyi & Abok, 2020), hit the global community like a hurricane, in a manner never witnessed before in human history. Nigeria recorded its first case of Covid-19 on February 27, 2020, when an Italian national travelled from Milan to Lagos, having previously tested positive for the virus on 25th of the same month (Ebonyi & Abok, 2020). Despite spirited efforts by government and other stakeholders, to contain the spread of the disease, with combinations of pharmaceutical (drugs), and non-pharmaceutical measures such as physical distancing, lockdowns, hand-washing, and face-masking, the pandemic continues to disrupt people's social lives and livelihoods including that of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) scattered across many states in the country, and living in dismal circumstances. Nonetheless, surviving against all odds remains a priority for the IDPs, who adopt various coping mechanisms such as social support, prayer, and general resilience to make sense of their lived experiences.

While a lot of studies have been done regarding the impacts of Covid-19 on the economy generally, there appears to be paucity of research into how Internally Displaced Persons navigate their way through the labyrinth of Covid-19 pandemic, and the techniques the find helpful in coping with challenges posed by the disease. The current study has bridged this gap as it examined the lived experiences of IDPs in New Kuchingoro Internally Displaced Persons Camp. It adds to extant literature on conditions of IDPs during Covid-19 pandemic.

The overall objective of the study was to explore the challenges of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The specific objectives were to:

i. Examine the psychological challenges of IDPs amid Covid-19 pandemic.
ii. Ascertain the social challenges of IDPs amid Covid-19 pandemic.
Iii. Identify the coping mechanisms of the IDPs during the pandemic.

2. Literature Review

2.2 Internal Displacement and Internally Displaced Persons

Internal displacement involves the forced movement of people within their country; within the context of conflict, violence, development projects, disasters and climate change, with "millions more living in situations of protracted internal displacement or facing chronic displacement risk" (International Displacement Monitoring Centre [IDMC], 2021). Internally Displaced Persons are "category of people who have been forced to leave their places of regular habitation in order to keep away from the effects of armed conflict, violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, but they have not crossed an internationally standard State borders" (Kazmi, et al., 2015; Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement [GPID] (1998, as cited in GPC, 2021). The IDMC had earlier reported a spike in displacement globally, showing Africa and Asia as having the highest number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDMC, 2014).

As at the end of 2020, 55.0 million people were living in internal displacement because of conflict, violence and disasters - natural and human-made. Internal displacement as the figures show, is becoming alarming, even though the larger global community seem to be unaware of it, or simply would not care (IDMC, 2021). Nigeria

recorded a total of 2,873,000 out of the 55 million persons displaced globally. 48 million persons were displaced owing to conflict and violence, in 59 countries and territories; and 7 million as a result of disasters (unspecified) in 103 countries and territories (IDMC, 2021). Internal displacement regardless of its trigger, is indicative of state fragility implicated in weak governance, fragile institutions, corruption and mismanagement of public funds cascading into unequal wealth distribution as well as political exclusion and economic disadvantage of greater multitudes of people (Duruji & Oviasogie, 2013).

Displacement impacts on one's identity, family and livelihood. This can happen in several ways, for both male and female, such as loss of houses, jobs, income, livestock, agriculture or farming and business all of which combine to exacerbate existing challenges and weaken breadwinners' ability to provide for their families and relations, in terms of food, shelter, clothing education and health care (Kazmi, et al. 2015). Accommodation for forcibly displaced populations come in various shapes and qualities such as tented and well-fortified camps, temporary transit and detention centres, unsheltered temporary arrangements or structures on unused land in towns and cities among 'host' communities not displaced by conflict (Kazmi, et al., 2015). SSHAP (2020) study revealed how IDPs population could be greater or higher than that of host communities. For example, it reported that in North-West Syria, between 6 and 11 displaced persons are likely to share a small tent, caravan or one-room-shelter within larger formal or informal settlements. Thus, shelter constitutes the highest challenges to displaced people. In terms of sanitation, it added that most families share latrines with other households, occasionally having to queue for 30 minutes to use the convenience.

In a related study conducted by Refugee International, it found that many internally displaced persons live in congested shelters in formal and informal camps, where extended families are unwittingly forced to share the same bathroom, the same bathing and cooking facilities, that might be inaccessible. It concludes that the contagious nature of the coronavirus portends grievous vulnerability in these living conditions (Refugee International, 2020).

Olukolajo, et al. (2014) note that displacement leads to an overarching negative socio-economic consequences in people's lives worldwide. Concretely, the realities of IDPs camps indicate that during violent conflicts or natural disasters, IDPs are often forced to flee their homes, while their houses and properties are destroyed, looted or set ablaze; leaving the victims with the pressing challenge of searching for shelter, food, jobs while struggling to survive (Olukolajo et al., 2014; Jelili & Olarinwaju, 2016). The Boko Haram insurgency and counter-insurgency activities of the Federal Government of Nigeria and its partners, in the three North-Eastern States of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, as well as other security challenges across the country, such as the farmers-herders clashes, communal and religious violence in Kaduna, Plateau, and Nasarawa, in the North-Central, have occasioned massive internal displacements of people to different States and locations, majority of whom are in the most affected North-eastern States (Tyohemba & Nzor, 2015; Kyari, 2017; Owonikoko, 2019). Some communities in the other States, including the FCT, also have IDPs camps. FCT alone has about seven (7) camps hosting displaced persons from the theater of conflict in the North-East. In July 2015, FEMA reported 30,659 IDPs in the FCT originating from Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States (Tyohemba & Nzor, 2015; Kyari, 2017). These camps are informal as they are not established by the Government, but because of huge number of displaced persons fleeing the Northeastern Boko Haram attacks, and for lack of proper or formal settlement, the IDPs resulted to using the available spaces, mostly on the fringes of Abuja (Kyari, 2017).

During their stay in these informal settlements, the IDPs have been facing numerous social, economic and psychological challenges arising from neglect and abandonment by the Government (Jelili &

Olarenwaju, 2016). Adewale (2016) observed that the conditions of IDPs in Abuja are made worse by government's "unenthusiastic" response to their plight, including failure to officially recognise their presence, thus, leading to unsafe and disgusting environment congenial to disease conditions, such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Ladan (2102) observed that most IDPs who flee to relatively safe locations outside their homestead, but leaving in temporary shelters such as schools, public buildings and places of worship, among others, did so after being deprived of their land and livelihoods, and lacking in food, water and shelter. Their vulnerabilities are further compounded by lack of access to basic needs such as healthcare services, education, employment, economic activities and, sundry challenges. Nonetheless, basic needs and tenacity to survive, remain a high priority for all the displaced persons (Kyari, 2017).

3. Method

3.1 Population and Sample

This study adopted the qualitative research design of enquiry to investigate the challenges faced by IDPs in New Kuchingoro camp, as well as the coping mechanisms utilised. A research design sets out the tone or plan for any kind of study in both the physical and social sciences. It enables the researcher to answer questions validly, objectively, accurately and economically, thus giving relevance to the research objective (Kumar, 2011). The current study was conducted in an informal camp settlement for IDPs that lacks official recorded population. It is an open camp comprising males, females, boys and girls, and children, most of whom just come in and leave at will. However, the camp is organized with some form of arrangement allowing for position holders (officials) such as Chairman, Secretary, Women Leader, and Youth Leader. The study used Semi-structured Key Informant Interview guide questions prepared by the researcher, to elicit information from three respondents, comprising the youth leader and two elders male and female. The interview questions centered on the study's core objectives.

The interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the capturing of every detail. The participants' responses were later transcribed and reported verbatim based on the research objectives. Considering ethical procedures, the researcher informed the participants about the purpose of the study, and also to know that they could choose to answer any questions posed to them or decline. To protect their identity, they were assured of utmost confidentiality and anonymity. This would encourage the participants to freely share their experiences based on the objectives of the study. Most importantly, respect for the dignity of study participants which is of utmost priority (Aylani, et al., 2021) was upheld by the researcher during the interviews.

3.2 Procedure and Selection of Participants

In selecting study participants, a relatively homogeneous group who share significant or similar experience concerning the phenomenon under study, is required in conducting a study of this nature (Creswell, 2009). In this light, the study utilised purposive sampling technique in selecting a youth leader, and two elders - male and female, to represent age difference and inclusiveness inside the camp. Inclusion criteria entails that a participant must be a camp official, a senior camp member, and living in the camp, as well as have good knowledge of events and challenges in the camp during Covid-19. The study participants aged 30 to 75.

This study used interview schedule guide to collect data from the purposively sampled participants. The interview questions focused on the objectives of the study earlier mentioned. The semi-structured,KII guide developed by the researcher, was the only instrument used for the primary data collection, while secondary data were collected from extant literature accessible online. The interviews were audio-recorded using the mobile phone and analysed to identify major themes based on the study's specific objectives. The elderly respondents were interviewed in the local language Hausa because they could not speak English. The researcher who understands Hausa, later

translated their responses into English before transcribing same for purposes of analysis.

Since it was a descriptive qualitative study, it employed the content analysis technique in understanding the challenges of the Internally Displaced Persons in the Camp. To ensure reliability, information provided by the participants were transcribed verbatim.

4. Results

Results are presented based on the objectives of the study, including psychological, social and economic effects of the Covid-19 on New Kuchingoro IDPs, and the coping mechanisms adopted. The responses are not in any particular order or format, as the informants were free to express their views in their own way. Therefore, the responses below are as reported by the respondents, who are numbered R1 to R3. Their responses were audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The results will be used to introduce and develop themes in the discussion section of the study.

Elderly male (R1)

The first person to be interviewed was an elderly male, aged 75. He reported that life in the camp has been quite challenging. However, he remained appreciative of the grace to stay alive throughout about 3 years since arriving at the camp. The interview was carried out outside a small Church, while the elderly man was preparing to go in for worship.

In an amazingly confident and relaxed tone of voice, R1 stated:

> Life is very tough here in the camp. We do get help sometimes, but like today, nobody has been here to give us anything, not even from the Government people.

When asked about how they survive generally, and if they are into farming, the elder responded:

> Yes, some people farm, they are even right now in the bush, on the farm, as we speak. Yes, we farm. And those of us at home, are just there like that doing nothing.

Probing further, to know if they engage in any form of business, he admitted:

> Yes, petty trading, yes, some of us trade.

On their ability to survive during the Covid-19, and how they protect themselves from the virus, the elder's words were:

> They bring things such as face mask and sanitizers for us to cover our nose to avoid catching the disease; even though some of us have the mask, others don't have it. But they do bring some to the camp.

When the elder was asked to comment on life generally during the Covid-19, and how they cope, he responded fatalistically:

> What can we do; we rely on God who alone has life and allows anything (referring to the pandemic, supposedly); to happen; if anyone's time is up, that is it, they go back to their creator.

Having said that, the respondent claimed that since the disease broke out in Nigeria, none of them has contracted it:

> Nobody has even been infected with the disease; no, nobody at all.

He also revealed that they don't observe the usual restrictions or protocols such as physical distancing; stressing that they have been living the same way they had before the outbreak of the Coronavirus disease.

Commenting on WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), R2 stated:

> Yes, we do use the convenience, but the only one available is far from where we are, so we usually resort to using the bush any time we are pressed. For water, there is borehole which we all use, but I don't know how it came about, or who provided it. I have been here only three years now; those who came here earlier

> like seven years ago, would know, but I don't. I met it here.

Do you think about going home sometimes, like feeling home sick? To this question, the elder responded rather philosophically:

> Yes, for that, as a human being, one must feel home sick and want to go back home; even though one is helpless regarding what to do; but certainly, thinking of home, it is real, one must think of home.

Adding, he noted:

> However, since it has happened, what can one do, one must be patient and accept one's fate.

The researcher sought to know whether the children are attending school while in the camp; and also, if the government makes provision for it:

> Yes, they children are attending school. There is a school right here (pointing to a corrugated zinc shelter opposite us), where the children receive teaching from volunteer teachers, who are among us. No provision from the government, whatsoever, no books, no teachers, nothing at all.

The IDPs do fall ill sometimes, and when they do, the can only make use of the available clinic located within the camp. R1 affirms:

> Yes, there is small dispensary or clinic with few drugs inside. Also, there is a small chemist here in the camp, which help us with little medicines for minor illnesses. But for serious cases, we usually go to the hospitals in town for medical services.

Asked if there was any provision for those of them who are old and weak, the elderly male resignedly responded:

> Well, what can we do? We only exercise patience, what can one do? When it is your time, you surrender to God, and leave; for one is here today, tomorrow no more. That is it. It's patience.

This informant affirmed that life in the camp is horrendous; however, they have had to survive by devising different strategies or mechanisms in the face of challenges:

> We do pray, asking God to give us peace of mind and enable us to leave together in peace with one another despite the challenges; and to be patient, and pray for our daily bread.

Elderly female (R2)

The next informant, elderly female, and aged 65, in the opening phase of the interview, narrated their ordeal leading to arrival at the camp. She felt the need, voluntarily, to start from when they first escaped from the Boko Haram attacks, at home:

> From the Cameroun Mountain, we started our journey of escape. We were stopping and sleeping at various places, from one town or village to another. Some people helped on along the way. We slept in the bush. We came out, managed to arrive here finally.

Pausing briefly, as if to fight off the sad memory, she continued:

> We arrived and here we are in this condition, suffering. We sleep in tents made of mere plastic bags or empty cement bags (pointing at some of the decrepit tents). We sleep in them, and here is rain falling, we are sock, the ground is also sock all the time; we practically sleep in the rain. Then we wait for people who come to help us.

Probed to know who the helpers might be, if they were government representatives or other people, and the elderly female responded:

> No, not government, the government

> does not come; they have never come here. They don't ever remember us.

Rounding off on this point, she said:

> Unless kind-hearted individuals; they are the helpers who come from inside the city. They bring food for us; which we collect and gather. When we gather all the food stuffs, we share among ourselves, little by little, until every person or household gets their share. We are really suffering, we are staying here with almost nothing to put in our mouth. Well, for life here, it is tough; we are suffering.

On WASH, and how they access this, R2 stated that it is difficult as well, even though there is a borehole which they all make use of. According to her:

> Yes, there is a borehole, which our helpers not the Government provided for our use. No, not the Government, they have no hand in it, not all. That is the only source of water here in the camp. We don't have anything else.

Concerning toiletry provision, here is what she said:

> There is provision for it in here in the camp, like two (pointing to one close by) which we use. Some persons use the bush nearby as well.

It was obvious from the informant's responses that there was no formal or official social support provided to the IDPs. They rely mainly on charitable organisations or kind-hearted individuals, who visit the camp occasionally and gift out some items to them. She stressed that the elderly members of the camp have nothing to survive on, not even a job, and no business of any sort.

Expressing the challenges they face particularly as elders, R2 stated:

> We the elderly neither farm nor engage in any form of trade; nothing. No money. We stay just like that, doing nothing. However, if people bring something, we the old ones, just sit by and watch since we do not have enough strength to struggle for the items. At the end of the day, we make do with whatever comes to us. That is how we survive here.

The Covid-19 especially has further exacerbated the existing challenges in several ways, even though they struggle to survive regardless.

Explaining the situation, R2 stated:

> We are coping with it. No of us has contracted the virus. Nothing has happened to us.

She never hid the fact that life in the camp, during the Covid-19 pandemic, was tough, and surviving was by the grace of God:

> We are experiencing serious problems during this period (apparently referring to the Covid-19 pandemic). Were it not for God and those people in town helping us . . . well, we are suffering seriously.

Regarding the thoughts of home, or feeling home sick, and desirous of going back home, the informant noted that they do actually think of home and going back, but then, what could they do, being that they are helpless. So, they usually resort to praying as a coping strategy.

R2, in a rather rhetorical tone encapsulated:

> If not for prayer, in this situation that someone has put us, how would we survive? We are joined in prayer by some kind-hearted individuals living in the city . . . if not prayer, would we be able to stay here like this?

Access to medication was challenging for the IDPs. They rely mostly on organisations or individuals from outside to provide them with some drugs for treatment of fever. She

revealed:

> There are people who sometimes bring some medications here. When they bring, they give us to use to treat ourselves whenever we fall ill. Then, also, there is a chemist here, where we access medications whenever we are sick.

Youth leader (R3)

This respondent is a married man, who struggles very hard to fend for himself, wife and two kids, and also cater for his extended family members who are far away in Cameroon. He painted a picture of a sole provider and bread-winner in his family. He revealed that about 95% of the camp members are from Gwoza Local Government Area, in Borno State:

> Covid-19 has made our stay here in the camp very difficult. Covid-19 has affected business. I can even talk about myself, especially regarding my business. During Covid-19, I was down, for like two months (referring to his business of shoe-making). So, I used do outside work, because I'm a shoe-maker, I was trained by somebody. The business is helping me to feed my family. Because I'm the only one. The remaining of my family is in Cameroon. I use to send money to them. But the Covid-19 has stopped or affected my business because I don't have anything doing again.

The people of Gwoza LGA are farmers and survived on farm yields. However, the Boko Haram insurgency has disrupted their major occupation and left them with no other business or source of income, further impoverishing them and exacerbating their existing conditions. Describing how tough life has been for them since living their homes in Gwoza LGA, R3 recalled:

> When I was in my village I used to go to farm . . . we came here in 2014. We always encourage our people since I am one of the leaders. We always organise ourselves, and how we can hustle for ourselves, instead of waiting for people, since we are farmers.

He explained further:

> . . . even about 90% of IDPs are in Nasarawa State. They gave us lands there, but now it is expensive. The one that used to be fourty thousand Naria, is now sixty thousand to rent. Although when we first arrived here, they used to beg us to come farm on the lands, but now it is not the case; we pay them money to farm on the land.

On this point, R3 concluded while mentioning the other camp officials, how they make deliberate efforts to ensure that everyone have food to eat:

> Actually, as mentioned the Covid-19 has affected me and my family; especially we who are leaders, we use to organise everything, we use to go out to beg from Churches so that our people can get food to eat; I and my chairman, secretary, women leader, coordinator; we use to organise our people. As I mentioned, we don't want to stay without doing something.

Using himself as example, to explain how industrious they are as IDPs, and their desire to acquire new skills for self-sustenance this participant said:

> . . . like this shoe-making I'm into, I was trained by Caritas Foundation, under the Catholic Church. They trained us and shared the items (materials) to us . . . how I can make soaps, room freshener, Vaseline, insecticides . . . I'm doing this as a business so that I can provide food for my family . . . .

R3 implored stating that they need official approval of their products such as National Agency for Food and Drug Administration Control (NAFDAC) registration so as to have good patronage as people are usually skeptical

of the quality of their products:

> . . . but the problem is that we are crying for NAFDAC and labels, because we just sell it like this; some people use to buy although not outsiders. So, at the end of the day, there is hardly any gain in it. If I make like N500 or N1000, I cannot safe from it, I use everything to buy food for my family. So, actually, the Covid-19 is affecting us.

The respondents reported that during the pandemic, they do receive protection kits from religious bodies and concerned citizens. R3, for example, stated unequivocally:

> Yes, we get items such as face mask, sanitizers, from religious bodies, and not the Government. If they are bringing food items, we use to combine it with sanitizers and face mask so that we will be protecting ourselves. They even teach us how we can protect ourselves from Covid-19.

On their coping mechanism during the pandemic, R3 mentioned how those of them who are into one form of small scale business or the other, do gather or contribute meager amount of money for everybody's upkeep:

> During the Covid-19 we use to gather N500; we who are doing small, small business, and give like N10 or N5 to those who don't have anything at all. We also play foot-ball while the women come out to watch, to help us and them to forget our pains and hardships.

The study probed the psychological, social and economic challenges of IDPs in New Kuchingoro camp, and the coping mechanisms adopted amid the Covid-19 pandemic. On analysis, certain overarching themes emerged, as table 1 shows.

Table 1: Overarching themes linked with psychological, social and economic challenges facing IDPs, and coping mechanisms

Challenges	Overarching Themes
Psychological challenges	Feeling home-sick
	Thoughts of going back home
	Feeling unrecognised and neglected by government
	Isolation/separation from family and relations
	Depression
Social Challenges	Poor shelter, sleeping under rain and exposed to dangerous pests, insects
	Lack of bathing and toilet facilities
	Inadequate teachers and teaching materials
	Poor feeding
Economic Challenges	Lack of finance to carry out business to support self and family
	Small-scale business/petty trading obstructed by Covid-19 pandemic
	Need to acquire skills for self-reliance
	Farming is major occupation, so, need land to farm
Coping Mechanisms	Prayer and church activities
	Group discussions/chats
	Playing of foot-ball

5. Discussion Of Findings

This study investigated the challenges and coping mechanism of IDPs at New Kuchingoro camp during Covid-19 pandemic. Results show that IDPs experience psychological, social and economic challenges, worsening existing conditions.

The IDPs had knowledge and awareness of Covid-19, but reported non-infection. However, they face major challenges to observing Covid-19 prevention measures as a result of crowded shelters, and poor hygiene. It is evident from the study that their desire for peace and to return to their ancestral homes, where they could easily have improved livelihoods despite the Covid-19 pandemic, was uppermost in their minds.

Concretely, the non-official recognition and neglect by the authorities continue to impact significantly on the lived experiences of the IDPs in terms of shelter, feeding (food), WASH, and education. They reported that since theyarrived at their present location, they have been suffering, living in unhygienic and unsanitary conditions, sleeping in tents as

shelter, and exposed to all sorts of hazards. For example R2 reported: ". . . here we are in this condition, suffering. We sleep in tents made of mere plastic bags or empty cement bags . . . and here is rain falling, we are soak, the ground is also soak all the time . . . ." This supports findings by SSHAP (2020), and Refugee International (2020), which revealed that majority IDPS live in appalling conditions in tents shared by large families, who are often exposed to dangerous situations including vulnerability to coronavirus infection. These situations further expose IDPs to psychological challenges such as feeling home-sick, isolation from family members, and general depression.

The IDPs have lost their livelihoods and become economically disempowered, a situation amplified by the Covid-19 outbreak. They are originally farmers who till the soil to fend for themselves and their families. However, having been denied access to their ancestral farmlands by Boko Haram attacks and forcibly displaced to settle in camps, they now struggle to survive mainly on charity but also through petty trading or business. This was revealed by R3, who stated: "When I was in my village I used to go to farm . . . we came here in 2014. We always encourage our people since I am one of the leaders. We always organise ourselves, see how we can hustle for ourselves, instead of waiting for people, since we are farmers."R1 corroborated this assertion when he reported, saying: "Yes, some people farm, they are even right now in the bush, on the farm, as we speak. Yes, we farm . . . petty trading, yes, some of us do." This is consistent with Kazmi et al's (2015) study which found that displacement impacts negatively on individual's identity, family and livelihood; stressing that both genders loose valuable items including houses, jobs, income, farm, and business thus, weakening breadwinners' ability to fend for their families and relations.

Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing challenges and vulnerabilities of the IDPs, since realistically, they are no longer able to "hustle" as they used to prior to the pandemic. Explicating this reality, the youth leader (R3) stated that his little shoe-making business now witnessed low patronage owing to the outbreak of Covid-19. He lamented: ". . . at the end of the day, there is hardly any gain in it. If I make like N500 or N1000, I cannot safe from it, I use everything to buy food for my family. So, actually, the Covid-19 is affecting us." Previous studies (Kazmi, 2015; Olukolajo, et al., 2014; Jelili & Olarinwaju, 2016), corroborated this fact, noting that economic impact in terms of access to shelter, jobs and education were major challenge facing IDPs.

A study by the Refugee International (2020), found that shelter constituted the highest challenge to displaced persons globally. Similarly, the current study revealed that the New Kuchingoro IDPs are confronted with the challenge of having to live in tents made of cement bags; exposed to the rains, and other natural elements. R3, For example, lamented: ". . . we are in this condition, suffering. We sleep in tents made of mere plastic bags or empty cement bags . . .We sleep in them, and here is rain falling, we are soak, the ground also is soak all the time; we practically sleep in the rain. Then we wait for people who come to help us."

The psychological challenges confronting the IDPs, this study's findings revealed, are far-reaching as all the respondents lamented that the government remains unperturbed by their predicaments, practically leaving them (IDPs) to their fate. This agrees with the findings of Adewale's (2016) study which indicated government negligence amid the deplorable environment inhabited by Abuja IDPs. This is in addition to feelings of isolation induced by separation from family members, and invariably precipitating nostalgic thoughts about home.

Also, findings of this study revealed that the IDPs expressed agonizing fatalism; an indication of the lived experiences of helplessness and neglect common among IDPs living in extremely difficult conditions, nevertheless surviving against all odds.

6. Conclusion

This study provided an empirical exploration of IDPs challenges as they struggle to survive amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic affects the marginalized segment of our

societies the most, including persons forcibly displaced by conflict and war. Those who are at most risk are IDPs in informal settlements, majority of whom live in locations outside their states. IDPs in New Kuchingoro camp fall into the category of persons displaced and living in informal settlements, neglected by government, and struggling to make ends meet, and for whom the pandemic and lockdowns are particularly dire to contend. In the face of these challenges, IDPs in New Kuchingoro camp are doing their best to adapt - soliciting for support where they can find some, begging, doing petty trading, subsistence farming, and strategising on possible ways to survive amid the Covid-19 pandemic. However, in this period of the pandemic and feeling abandoned by the Government, their options are limited.

Giving the characteristic challenges of surviving during Covid-19, restoration of peace and security by controlling the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East and other criminal activities in other states where the people are forcibly displaced, is pertinent for IDPs and would allow a safe return to their lands where they could more easily afford a relatively decent living while observing Covid-19 protocols. However, in the interim, Government should disburse sufficient funds and monitor its spending, to mitigate the sufferings of IDPs, and improve their conditions.

The outcome of the study is intended for use in the formulation of policies on IDPs vulnerabilities and resilience during a pandemic with the sole purpose of providing sustainable livelihoods, and ensuring the peace and security of the displaced populations.

7. Implications For Policy And Practice

This study has ex-rayed the challenges faced by IDPs during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the context of the policy measures for the control of the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing insecurity in the North-East particularly and the country generally, it is imperative to intensify efforts aimed at providing adequate protection for the IDPs, majority of whom constitute the most vulnerable segment of our population. Such policies most if they are to achieve the desired impact intentionally and concretely involve all stakeholders, including law makers, security agencies, academics and peace practitioners. To understand displacement dynamics in terms of its cause, magnitude, impact and duration, and provide timely and effective responses, academics, peace scholars and practitioners, need to tirelessly appeal to government and its agencies to be transparent and accountable in discharging their responsibilities to IDPs.

Deficits in social and physical infrastructure, such as healthcare delivery systems, food, agriculture, education, shelter, and WASH, have revealed areas of opportunities for practical measures needed to be taken to mitigate the challenges confronting IDPs in Nigeria. This study observed that despite all the measures put in place by government (for example, by establishing the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management and Social Rehabilitation), there is still the stack reality of lack of shelter, food, healthcare facilities, jobs, education, together with and exacerbated by Covid-19. In this context, finding long-term solutions to IDPs' psychological, social, and economic marginalisation and abandonment will be crucial for duty-bearers and right-holders to leverage all available capacities to reduce existing challenges, and avoid the repeat of the risk conditions that informed the emergence of conflict (Boko Haram insurgency) leading to forcible displacements of large populations from the North-East. Mark Lowcock, Emergency Relief Coordinator, at the United Nations, states, "This pandemic is unlike anything we have dealt with in our lifetime. This is not business as usual. Extraordinary measures are needed" (Global Humanitarian Response Plan [GHRP], 2020); most importantly, to mitigate the vulnerabilities of internally displaced persons living in informal and formal camps across Nigeria.

8. Limitations

A few limitations of the study should be mentioned. Among the persons slated for interviews were the camp chairman and the women leader, to get more knowledge or information, but they were absent during the

interview. This reduced the number of participants to 3, which made it seem small. Another limitation is that the instrument used for this study was not pilot-tested. Results of the study are limited by how participants interpreted interview questions.

References

Adewale, S. (2016). Internally displaced persons and the challenges of survival in Abuja. *African Security Review, 25* (2), 176-192, DOI: 10.1080/10246029.2016.1154475

Aylanil, Z., Cuizon, R. Bohol, S. M., Caranzo, V. Veroy, J. & Dagohoy, R. (2021). Practices and Challenges of Barangay Nanyo, Panabo City in Responding to COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, V(VIII), 231-240.

Creswell, J. (2009). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches. https://www.academia. edu /34683943/Research_Design_Qualitative_John._W_Creswell_.pdf

Duruji, M. M., & Oviasogie,F.O. (2013). State failure, terrorism and global security: an appraisal of the Boko Haram insurgency in Northern Nigeria, *J. Sustain. Soc. 2* (1), 2030.

Ebonyi, A. A.,& Abok, A. (2020). Sociological Assessment of the Perception of Nigerians on the Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) Pandemic. *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation*, VII (V), 192 198.

Ejiofor, O. C., Oni, S. & Sejoro, J. V. (2017). An Assessment of the Impact of Internal Displacement on Human Security in Northern Nigeria (2009- 2016). *AUDRI, 10* (1), 19-42

Global Protection Cluster [GPC] (2021). https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/en/
Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, (2007). Addressing Urban Displacement- A Project Description. (IDMC, Norwegian Refugee Council: Geneva)

Jelili M. O., & Olarenwaju, S. O. (2016). Realities of IDPs Camps in Nigeria. *Global Journal of Human Social Science, 16* (4).

Kazmi, S. F., Abbasi, S. B., Khan, A. M. & Taj, R. (2015). Stressful Life Events among Internally Displaced Persons of KPK after Military Operation. *Ann. Pak. Inst. Med. Sci.*, *11*(1), 40-46

Kumar. R. (2011) (2nd Ed.). *Research Methodology: a step-by-step guide for beginners*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Ladan, M.T. (2012), Impact of Insecurity in the North on Internally Displaced People and Migration Flows between Nigeria and Neighbouring Countries, Being a Paper presented at the Forum of European Union Working Group on Migration and Development, Abuja, May 31, 2012.

Lowcock, M. (2020, May 11). This pandemic is unlike anything we have dealt with in our lifetime. Global Humanitarian Response Plan [GHRP]. Https://www.unodc.org/

Mohammed, F. K. (2017). The Causes and Consequences of Internal Displacement in Nigeria and Related Governance Challenges. *Working Paper DivisionGlobal Issues* Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, German Institute for International and Security Affairs

Omosekejimi, A. F., Dada, G. A., & Ebhonu, S. I (2021). Covid-19 Information Seeking Behaviour of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*, 5150.

Owonikoko, S. B. (2019). Challenges of Reintegration in the Rebuilding of Post-Insurgency, North East, Nigeria. In Bogoro, E. S., Meyer, M. & Danjibo, N. D (Eds.), *Readings in Peace and Conflict: Essays in Honour of Professor Isaac Olawale Albert* (p.300).

Social Science in Humanitarian Action

Platform [SSHAP] (2020). Covid-19 and Forced Displacement in the Middle East and East Africa. *Https://*www.socialscience inaction.org/

Refugee International (2020). COVID-19 and the Displaced: Addressing the Threat of the Novel Coronavirus in Humanitarian Emergencies March 30, 2020)

Tyohemba, H., & Nzor, E. (2015, December 10). Despite Challenges, Children Embrace Education in New Kuchingoro IDP Camp. *Leadership Newspaper*. *https://leadership. Ng/despite-challenges-children-embrace-education-in-new-kuchingoro-idp-camp/*