



EVALUATING THE PSYCHOSOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF FORCED DISPLACEMENT AMONG CONFLICT-AFFECTED YOUTHS IN NORTHEAST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The protracted Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) insurgency in Northeast Nigeria has generated one of the most severe humanitarian displacements on the African continent, concentrating its devastation primarily across Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states. This paper evaluates the psychosocial and educational consequences of this forced displacement for conflict-affected youths in the region. Drawing on a systematic review of peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional humanitarian reports, and field-based qualitative and quantitative studies published between 2018 and 2026, the paper argues that displacement has produced compounding and intergenerational harm: youths in displacement settings exhibit clinically significant rates of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and functional impairment, while simultaneously enduring the near-total collapse of formal schooling. The destruction of over 1,500 educational facilities, the killing and displacement of thousands of teachers, and the pervasive climate of fear in learning environments have collectively denied millions of children and adolescents their fundamental right to education. The paper further identifies critical gaps in the existing literature, including the absence of longitudinal studies tracking outcomes across displacement phases, the underrepresentation of gender-disaggregated data, and an inadequate evidence base on intervention effectiveness. Policy-relevant recommendations targeting the Federal Government of Nigeria, UNICEF Nigeria, UNHCR Nigeria, the Borno State Ministry of Education, Save the Children Nigeria, and the International Rescue Committee are advanced, with the goal of restoring protective systems that simultaneously address mental health and educational continuity for displaced youths.

Keywords: forced displacement, internally displaced persons, Boko Haram, Northeast Nigeria, and youths mental health.

INTRODUCTION

Northeast Nigeria has endured more than fifteen years of asymmetric conflict driven principally by Boko Haram and its splinter affiliate, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Since Boko Haram's formal insurgency began in 2009, the three states most devastated by sustained violence – Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe – have witnessed a humanitarian catastrophe without parallel in Nigeria's postcolonial history. The consequences have been measured in countless ways: lives lost, communities destroyed, livelihoods obliterated, and social bonds irreparably fractured. Yet among the most enduring and underexamined consequences are those borne by children and young people, whose developmental trajectories have been fundamentally disrupted by displacement, trauma exposure, and educational deprivation (Olufadewa et al., 2022; David et al., 2023). The scale of displacement in Northeast Nigeria is staggering. According to the International Organization for Migration's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), the northeastern geopolitical zone comprising Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe states hosted approximately 2,252,348 internally displaced persons (IDPs) as of November 2024, distributed across 465,935 households (IOM DTM, 2024). Among these, Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (the BAY states) remain the epicenter of conflict-induced displacement, accounting for the overwhelming majority of both IDPs and returnees. An earlier national displacement profile documented that, as of December 2023, the total IDP population across Nigeria stood at approximately 3.4 million individuals, with 2,305,335 concentrated in the northeastern zone alone (IOM DTM, 2023). These figures, while significant, likely underestimate the true scale of displacement, given the persistent inaccessibility of areas in Borno State such as Kukawa, Kala/Balge, and Guzamala, where ongoing hostilities have blocked humanitarian monitoring operations (IOM DTM, 2024).

The insurgency derives its ideological character from an extreme interpretation of Islam that explicitly condemns secular and Western-oriented education—a disposition embedded in the very name 'Boko Haram,' which translates loosely as 'Western education is forbidden' (O'Connor et al., 2021). This anti-education ideology has translated directly into systematic violence against schools and educational personnel. Between 2009 and 2018, an estimated 1,500 schools were destroyed in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states, while 19,000 teachers were displaced and numerous educators were killed (Journal of Educational Research, 2024). As of early 2021, approximately 60 percent of schools in Borno State remained closed, and an estimated 1.3 million individuals – 97 percent of them children—required education-in-emergencies (EiE) support (O'Connor et al., 2021). A UNESCO report published in 2023 characterized the northeastern region as home to some of the worst educational indicators in Nigeria,

including elevated dropout rates, chronic school absenteeism, pronounced gender disparities in enrollment, and persistently poor learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2023, as cited in IJRIS, 2025). The psychosocial toll of the insurgency on displaced youths is equally severe. Research conducted across IDP camps in Northern Nigeria has documented that young, displaced persons frequently report symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and prolonged grief, rooted in direct exposure to violence, forced family separations, and the traumatic loss of loved ones (Olufadewa et al., 2022; David et al., 2023). A landmark assessment of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) needs among IDPs in Northeast Nigeria found that 60 percent of respondents strongly endorsed at least one mental health symptom, while 75 percent reported associated functional impairment (Haroz et al., 2020). The same study revealed the unexpected finding that adult men carried the highest symptom burden—a pattern that challenges conventional MHPSS frameworks that prioritize women and children. For youths specifically, the combination of traumatic experience, displacement-induced poverty, and educational exclusion creates a convergence of adversities that renders normal developmental milestones cognitive, social, and psychological – significantly less attainable. Despite the gravity of the crisis, scholarly attention to the specific nexus of psychosocial harm and educational deprivation among displaced youths in Northeast Nigeria remains comparatively sparse. Much of the available literature focuses either on broader adult IDP populations or on macro-level security and political analyses of the Boko Haram phenomenon, leaving the developmental consequences for young people inadequately theorized and poorly evidenced.

This paper draws on two complementary theoretical frameworks. The first is the Ecological Systems Theory advanced by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), which conceptualizes child development as shaped by nested environmental systems – the microsystem of immediate family and school environments, the mesosystem of relationships between proximal settings, the exosystem of broader social institutions, and the macrosystem of cultural and ideological forces. Forced displacement fundamentally disrupts each of these systems: it disrupts microsystem relationships through family separation and community destruction, undermines mesosystem coherence by removing children from school-family networks, dismantles exosystem support through the collapse of institutional services, and exposes displaced youths to a macrosystem dominated by violence and ideological extremism. This framework renders visible the systemic, multilevel nature of displacement-induced harm and supports the paper's argument that effective intervention must operate across all system levels simultaneously. The second theoretical anchor is the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Pyramid developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC, 2007), which proposes a layered intervention continuum from basic social and community supports at the foundation to specialized clinical services at the apex. This framework is particularly germane to the Northeast Nigeria context because it highlights how the collapse of basic social

supports – which displaced youths experience as a routine feature of camp and host community life – creates cascading vulnerabilities that cannot be addressed through clinical intervention alone. Read together, these frameworks direct analytical attention toward the structural determinants of psychosocial harm and the systemic conditions required for educational recovery. The mental health literature on conflict-affected and displaced youths is now substantial enough to permit confident generalizations, even as it continues to expand. Blackmore et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis examining the prevalence of mental illness among child and adolescent refugees and asylum seekers, finding that PTSD, depression, and anxiety appeared at rates substantially elevated above non-displaced comparison populations. The pooled prevalence of PTSD among displaced children in multiple contexts exceeded 30 percent in several analyses. Fazel et al. (2012), in a widely cited multi-country review, similarly documented elevated psychiatric morbidity across refugee youths populations, with PTSD and depression emerging as the dominant diagnostic categories. These findings converge across geographically diverse settings – Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo – suggesting that the mechanisms through which displacement produces psychosocial harm are somewhat consistent regardless of geographic context, even as the specific cultural idioms of distress vary considerably. The pathways through which displacement generates mental health harm are multiple. Exposure to violence, witnessing death, forced family separation, and the abrupt loss of home and community constitute what trauma researchers classify as acute stressors. Displacement then compounds these with what have been called 'post-migration living difficulties': overcrowded and insecure camp conditions, poverty-induced food insecurity, restricted movement, and profound uncertainty about the future (Silove et al., 2017). For children and adolescents, the developmental consequences of sustained exposure to these compounded stressors include not only psychiatric symptoms but also impairments in cognitive functioning, language development, social competence, and moral reasoning – all of which are prerequisites for successful educational engagement. An important, though less frequently acknowledged, dimension of displacement-related psychosocial harm concerns social cohesion. Displacement typically destroys the extended family and community networks that, in many sub-Saharan African contexts, constitute primary systems of social support and meaning making. For youths in Northeast Nigeria, these networks carry additional significance because they are embedded within Islamic educational and spiritual traditions that provide not only theological grounding but also normative frameworks for adolescent identity formation. The destruction of these networks through displacement thus constitutes a loss that is simultaneously social, spiritual, and developmental.

The relationship between armed conflict and educational disruption is well established in humanitarian literature. Conflict destroys school infrastructure through direct attacks, repurposing of school

buildings as military installations or IDP shelters, and the displacement of the teacher workforce. It reduces demand for schooling by generating household poverty that makes school-related expenses unaffordable, by creating security fears that deter attendance, and by producing trauma-related cognitive and behavioral difficulties that impair children's capacity to learn even when schools remain accessible. The United Nations Education Cannot Wait fund's characterization of Northeast Nigeria as a region where educational institutions are routinely attacked – with students killed, abducted, and teachers displaced – captures the dual-sided nature of this disruption: both supply and demand for education are simultaneously undermined (Education Cannot Wait, 2022). The concept of Education in Emergencies (EiE) has emerged over the past two decades as a humanitarian programming paradigm specifically designed to maintain educational continuity for conflict-affected populations. The Sphere Standards, the Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies developed by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), and the Safe Schools Declaration – endorsed by Nigeria at the 2015 Oslo Conference – provide normative frameworks for EiE programming. The Global Partnership for Education committed USD five million in funding for the 2024–2025 academic year to support educational recovery across Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states, with implementation led by UNICEF, benefiting over 190,000 conflict-affected children (GPE, 2026). While significant, this investment represents a fraction of the total educational need. The specific body of literature on psychosocial and educational consequences for youths in Northeast Nigeria, while growing, remains thinner than the scale of the problem demands. The most directly relevant contributions cluster around three methodological approaches: community-based qualitative inquiry, epidemiological symptom surveys, and policy-oriented situational analyses.

Olufadewa et al. (2022) conducted an influential qualitative study among young IDPs residing in the Durumi and New Kuchingoro camps in Northern Nigeria, identifying five primary thematic domains: knowledge about mental health; mental health experiences; coping strategies; availability of mental health and other health support; and needed support. Participants' pre-displacement lives were characterized by stability and familial cohesion; post-displacement, participants reported pervasive experiences of stress, trauma, shock, sadness, depression, anxiety, and PTSD symptoms. Critically, participants identified the near-total absence of structured mental health support within the camps, relying instead on individual coping strategies such as music, sport, and informal social interactions. David et al. (2023) extended this inquiry specifically to displaced adolescents in Northeast Nigeria, examining mental health vulnerability, psychological symptom profiles, and coping mechanisms. Their findings corroborated the high prevalence of trauma-related symptoms while illuminating the coping repertoires that adolescents deploy in the absence of institutional support. Haroz et al. (2020), in a community-based MHPSS needs assessment across IDP and host community populations in Northeast Nigeria, combined free-listing ethnographic

methods with structured symptom surveys to document both cultural idioms of distress (notably 'thinking too much,' or zuciyam mu na sinkewa in Hausa) and the quantitative symptom burden. On the educational side, Ezera and Oghenede (2021) documented access barriers facing IDP children in the BAY states, finding that of an IDP child population of approximately 452,620 across the three states, significant proportions remained out of school or enrolled in grossly under-resourced facilities. Research from the Abuja Journal of Humanities (2025) documented that over 89 percent of community survey respondents reported that children in their communities had stopped attending school for prolonged periods. Community resilience research from Madagali, Adamawa State, demonstrated that informal community-led educational initiatives emerged as survival mechanisms in the absence of functional formal schooling, though these initiatives could not substitute for the resources and credentialing that formal education provides (Journal of African Education and Traditional Learning Systems, 2025). A structured review of the available literature reveals several significant research gaps with direct implications for both scholarship and programming. First, most existing studies are cross-sectional in design, capturing outcomes at a single point in time. The absence of longitudinal studies means that the trajectory of psychological recovery or deterioration across the arc of displacement from acute displacement through protracted camp residence through potential return is almost entirely unknown. This gap materially impedes the design of stage-appropriate interventions. Second, gender-disaggregated analysis of both psychosocial and educational outcomes remains inadequate. Girls' exposure to conflict-related sexual violence, abduction, and enforced domestic labor following displacement constitutes a specific and severe harm pathway whose mental health and educational consequences remain poorly quantified in the Nigerian context. Third, the evidence based on effectiveness of intervention is thin. Very few peer-reviewed studies have evaluated the impact of specific MHPSS or EiE interventions among displaced youths in Northeast Nigeria. The Brave Heart intervention evaluated by Adesina et al. (2024) represents one of the few published trials, but the research field remains dominated by needs assessments and descriptive studies rather than rigorous impact evaluations.

Fourth, the literature gives insufficient attention to returnee youths – those who have begun to return to areas of origin in the BAY states – whose reintegration trajectories involve distinct psychosocial and educational challenges that differ from those of IDPs who remain in displacement settings. IOM DTM recorded approximately 2,093,604 returnees in the BAY states as of June 2024 (IOM DTM, 2024), a population of comparable magnitude to the IDP population, yet almost entirely absent from the research literature.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Forced displacement has emerged as one of the most significant humanitarian and developmental challenges confronting Nigeria, particularly in the Northeast region. Over the past decade, the insurgency and violent conflicts associated with the activities of armed groups have led to the displacement of millions of individuals from their homes, communities, and livelihoods. States such as Borno State, Adamawa State, and Yobe State have experienced widespread destruction of infrastructure, disruption of social services, and prolonged insecurity, resulting in large populations of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Among those most affected by forced displacement are young people, who constitute a significant proportion of the displaced population. Youths affected by conflict often experience multiple forms of psychosocial distress, including trauma, anxiety, depression, fear, grief, emotional instability, loss of social support systems, and uncertainty about the future. Exposure to violence, loss of family members, separation from loved ones, and prolonged residence in displacement camps or host communities can negatively affect their psychological well-being and social functioning. In addition to psychosocial challenges, forced displacement significantly disrupts educational opportunities for conflict-affected youths. Many schools have been destroyed, occupied, or rendered inaccessible due to insecurity. Consequently, numerous young people have experienced prolonged interruptions in their education, increased school dropout rates, poor academic performance, and limited access to quality learning resources. The loss of educational opportunities not only affects individual development but also undermines long-term human capital formation and socio-economic progress in the region.

Despite various interventions by government agencies, humanitarian organizations, and development partners, concerns remain regarding the extent to which the psychosocial and educational needs of displaced youths have been adequately addressed. Existing studies have largely focused on humanitarian assistance, security concerns, and general displacement issues, while limited attention has been devoted to the combined psychosocial and educational consequences of forced displacement among conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria. Insufficient empirical evidence exists regarding how displacement experiences influence the emotional well-being, educational participation, and future aspirations of affected youths. Without adequate understanding of these consequences, policymakers, educators, social workers, and humanitarian practitioners may find it difficult to design effective interventions that promote recovery, resilience, educational continuity, and social reintegration. It is against this background that this study seeks to evaluate the psychosocial and educational consequences of forced displacement among conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria, with the aim of providing evidence-based recommendations for improving psychosocial support services and educational interventions for displaced young people.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the psychosocial and educational consequences of forced displacement among conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

- I. Examine the psychosocial consequences of forced displacement among conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria.
- II. Assess the educational consequences of forced displacement on youths affected by conflict in Northeast Nigeria. .

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions will guide the study:

- I. What are the psychosocial consequences of forced displacement among conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria?
- II. What are the educational consequences of forced displacement among conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between forced displacement and the psychosocial well being of conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria.

H₁₁ There is a significant relationship between forced displacement and the psychosocial well-being of conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this study is designed to provide a systematic and scientific approach to evaluating the psychosocial and educational consequences of forced displacement among conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria. The study employs a descriptive survey research design because it enables the researcher to collect data from a representative group of respondents and describe their experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and challenges regarding forced displacement. The descriptive survey design is particularly suitable because the study seeks to obtain firsthand information from displaced youths without manipulating any of the variables under investigation. Through this approach, the researcher is able to examine how forced displacement has affected the emotional well-being, social adjustment, educational participation, and academic experiences of the affected youths. The design also facilitates the collection of quantitative data that can be analyzed statistically to identify patterns, relationships, and trends relating to the psychosocial and educational effects of displacement. Furthermore, the design allows findings from the selected sample to be generalized to the wider population of conflict-affected youths within the study area. The study is carried out in Northeast Nigeria, a region that has experienced prolonged insurgency, armed conflict, and humanitarian crises resulting in large-scale population displacement. The Northeast geopolitical zone consists of six states: Adamawa State, Bauchi State, Borno State, Gombe State, Taraba State, and Yobe State. Particular attention is given to Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States because these states have experienced the highest levels of conflict-related displacement and host a large number of internally displaced persons. These states contain numerous internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and host communities where displaced youths reside and receive educational, humanitarian, and psychosocial support services. The selection of these states provides a suitable context for examining the consequences of forced displacement among youths. The population of the study consists of conflict-affected youths residing in selected internally displaced persons camps and host communities within Northeast Nigeria. For the purpose of this research, youths are defined as individuals between the ages of 15 and 35 years who have experienced displacement as a result of armed conflict, insurgency, or related insecurity. The target population includes both male and female youths who have experienced educational interruptions, psychological distress, social dislocation, or other consequences associated with forced displacement. It also includes youths participating in formal education, non-formal education, vocational training programmes, or alternative learning opportunities within displacement settings. Based on records obtained from selected camps and host communities, the estimated population for the study is 1,200 conflict-affected youths. From this population, a sample size of 300 respondents is selected for the study. The sample size is

considered adequate to provide reliable and representative information while ensuring effective administration of the research instrument. The sample size is determined using the Taro Yamane sampling formula at a 5 percent level of significance. The use of an appropriate sample size enhances the reliability of the findings and ensures that the views and experiences of the respondents adequately represent those of the larger population. A multistage sampling technique is employed in selecting the respondents for the study. At the first stage, purposive sampling is used to select Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States because of their high concentration of conflict-affected and displaced populations. At the second stage, selected internally displaced persons camps and host communities are purposively chosen based on accessibility, security considerations, and the presence of significant numbers of displaced youths. At the third stage, simple random sampling is utilized to select individual respondents from the sampling frame of eligible youths within the selected camps and communities. This procedure ensures fairness in the selection process and gives every qualified respondent an equal chance of participating in the study.

The study utilizes both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data are obtained directly from respondents through the administration of a structured questionnaire designed specifically for the study. The questionnaire collects information on demographic characteristics, psychosocial experiences, educational challenges, coping strategies, and the overall effects of displacement on respondents. Secondary data are obtained from scholarly journals, textbooks, government publications, humanitarian agency reports, conference proceedings, policy documents, theses, dissertations, and other relevant academic materials. These secondary sources provide theoretical and empirical insights into forced displacement, psychosocial well-being, youth development, educational disruption, and conflict studies. The principal instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire titled “Psychosocial and Educational Consequences of Forced Displacement Questionnaire (PECFDQ).” The instrument is carefully developed to align with the objectives and research questions of the study. The questionnaire consists of several sections. The first section collects demographic information such as age, gender, educational status, duration of displacement, and place of residence. Subsequent sections contain items designed to assess psychosocial consequences, including anxiety, depression, emotional distress, trauma experiences, social isolation, self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships. Additional sections focus on educational consequences such as school attendance, learning disruptions, academic performance, access to educational resources, and educational aspirations. Responses are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, to Strongly Disagree. To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire is subjected to face and content validation by experts in social work, educational psychology, measurement and evaluation, and community development. These experts

carefully examine the instrument to determine whether the items adequately represent the variables being investigated and whether they align with the objectives and research questions of the study. Their observations, recommendations, and corrections are incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire before it is administered to respondents. The reliability of the instrument is established through a pilot study conducted among a small group of displaced youths who are not included in the main study population. Data obtained from the pilot test are analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha reliability method to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable, indicating that the instrument is capable of producing consistent and dependable results when administered under similar conditions. Data collection is carried out by the researcher with the assistance of trained research assistants who are familiar with the study environment and local languages where necessary. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, approval and permission are obtained from camp management authorities, community leaders, and relevant governmental or humanitarian agencies responsible for the welfare of displaced persons. Respondents are informed about the purpose of the study and assured that all information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. Participation in the study is voluntary, and respondents are free to withdraw at any stage without any consequences. Completed questionnaires are retrieved immediately after completion to minimize loss and ensure a high response rate. The data collected from respondents are coded, organized, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical tools such as frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations are used to answer the research questions and describe the characteristics of the respondents. These statistical techniques help summarize the data and provide a clear understanding of the psychosocial and educational consequences experienced by displaced youths. The hypothesis formulated for the study is tested using Simple Linear Regression Analysis at a 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule states that if the calculated p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, whereas if the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Regression analysis is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to determine the extent to which forced displacement influences the psychosocial well-being and educational experiences of conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria. Throughout the study, ethical principles are strictly observed. Respondents are treated with dignity and respect, confidentiality is maintained, and no information capable of identifying individual participants is disclosed. The study also takes into consideration the vulnerability of displaced youths by ensuring that participation does not expose them to additional psychological distress or harm. These ethical considerations contribute to the credibility, integrity, and acceptability of the research findings.

RESULT

RESEARCH QUESTION TWO Psychosocial Consequences of Forced Displacement among Conflict-Affected Youths in Northeast Nigeria

Table 1: Psychosocial Consequences of Forced Displacement among Conflict-Affected Youths in Northeast Nigeria

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD	N	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	SD	Decision
1	Forced displacement has increased feelings of anxiety among youths.	130	110	30	20	10	300	4.10	0.82	Accepted
2	Forced displacement has contributed to emotional distress among affected youths.	140	100	30	20	10	300	4.13	0.80	Accepted
3	Displacement has led to social isolation and loss of social support networks.	120	120	30	20	10	300	4.07	0.85	Accepted
4	Many displaced youths experience low self-esteem and reduced confidence.	125	115	30	20	10	300	4.08	0.84	Accepted
5	Exposure to conflict and displacement has increased trauma-related experiences among youths.	145	105	20	20	10	300	4.18	0.78	Accepted

| Grand Mean | | | | | | | **4.11** | **0.82** | Accepted |

The findings presented in Table 4.3.1 indicate that forced displacement has significant psychosocial consequences on conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria. The grand mean score of 4.11, which is above the benchmark of 3.00, confirms that respondents strongly agreed that displacement negatively

affects their psychological and emotional well-being. The highest mean score ($\bar{X} = 4.18$) was recorded for the statement that exposure to conflict and displacement has increased trauma-related experiences among youths. This suggests that many displaced youths have been exposed to traumatic events such as violence, loss of loved ones, destruction of property, insecurity, and forced migration, which continue to affect their mental health. Trauma remains one of the most severe psychosocial consequences of displacement because it often leads to emotional instability, fear, depression, and long-term psychological distress. The findings further reveal that emotional distress ($\bar{X} = 4.13$) and anxiety ($\bar{X} = 4.10$) are common experiences among displaced youths. The uncertainty surrounding their future, disruption of family structures, economic hardship, and exposure to conflict contribute significantly to feelings of worry, fear, and emotional discomfort. Many youths face difficulties adjusting to new environments and coping with the realities of displacement. The results also indicate that displacement contributes to low self-esteem ($\bar{X} = 4.08$) and social isolation ($\bar{X} = 4.07$). The loss of community networks, separation from friends, disruption of social relationships, and stigmatization often reduce youths' confidence and sense of belonging. These experiences may affect their ability to interact effectively with others and participate fully in community life.

.RESEARCH QUESTION TWO Educational Consequences of Forced Displacement among Conflict-Affected Youths in Northeast Nigeria

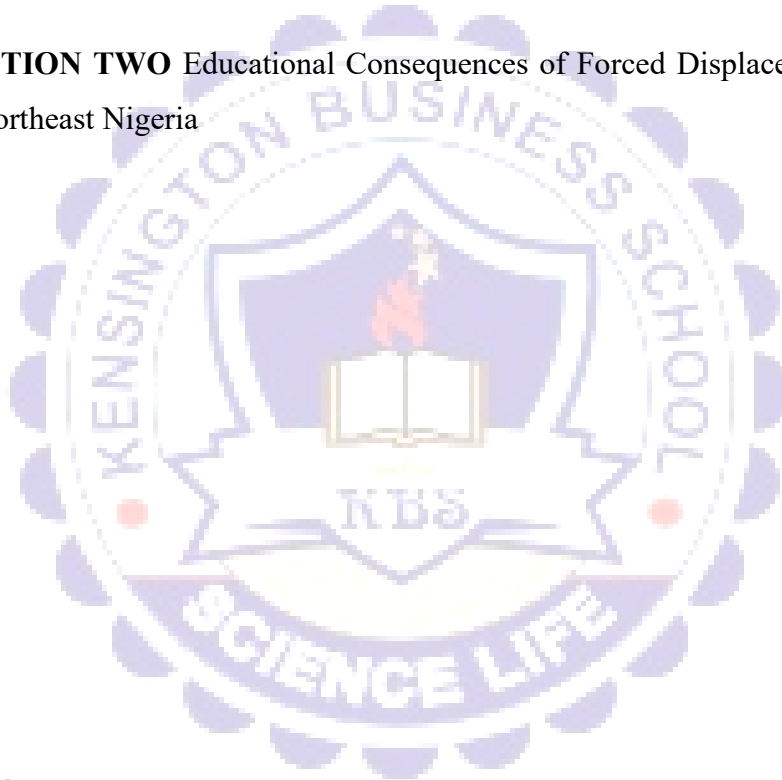


Table 2: Educational Consequences of Forced Displacement among Conflict-Affected Youths in Northeast Nigeria

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD	N	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	SD	Decision
1	Forced displacement has disrupted school attendance among affected youths.	145	105	20	20	10	300	4.18	0.79	Accepted
2	Displacement has negatively affected students' academic performance.	140	110	20	20	10	300	4.17	0.81	Accepted
3	Many displaced youths lack access to adequate learning materials and resources.	135	115	20	20	10	300	4.15	0.83	Accepted
4	Forced displacement has increased school dropout rates among youths.	130	120	20	20	10	300	4.13	0.84	Accepted
5	Educational aspirations of displaced youths have been negatively affected.	125	120	25	20	10	300	4.10	0.86	Accepted

| Grand Mean | ||||| **4.15** | **0.83** | Accepted |

The results presented in Table 4.3.2 show that forced displacement has substantial educational consequences for conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria. The grand mean score of 4.15 indicates strong agreement among respondents that displacement significantly disrupts educational experiences and learning outcomes. The highest mean score ($\bar{X} = 4.18$) relates to disruption of school attendance. This finding suggests that many displaced youths have experienced interruptions in their education due to insecurity, relocation, destruction of schools, and limited access to educational facilities within displacement settings. Frequent displacement often results in prolonged absence from school and discontinuity in learning. The study also found that displacement negatively affects academic performance

($\bar{X} = 4.17$). Learning interruptions, psychological trauma, inadequate learning environments, and insufficient educational support contribute to declining academic achievement among affected youths. Many students struggle to maintain concentration and motivation due to the emotional effects of displacement. The findings further indicate that access to learning materials and educational resources remains a major challenge ($\bar{X} = 4.15$). Displaced youths often lack textbooks, writing materials, computers, internet access, and other essential educational resources necessary for effective learning. These limitations create barriers to academic progress and educational attainment.

Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis One

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between forced displacement and the psychosocial well-being of conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria.

Table 4: Simple Linear Regression Analysis Showing the Relationship Between Forced Displacement and Psychosocial Well-Being

Variables	B	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p-value)	Decision
Constant	1.245	-	5.820	0.000	
Forced Displacement	0.738	0.738	14.652	0.000	Significant

Model Summary

R	R²	Adjusted R²	F-value	Sig.
0.738	0.545	0.543	214.68	0.000

The regression analysis presented in Table 4.4.1 reveals a strong positive relationship between forced displacement and the psychosocial well-being of conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria. The correlation coefficient ($R = 0.738$) indicates a substantial association between the variables, while the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.545$) implies that approximately 54.5% of the variation in psychosocial well-being can be explained by experiences of forced displacement. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.738$) demonstrates that forced displacement significantly predicts psychosocial outcomes among affected youths. The calculated t-value of 14.652 and the probability value ($p = 0.000$) are statistically significant at the 0.05 level since the p-value is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (H_{11}) is accepted. This means that there is a statistically significant relationship

between forced displacement and the psychosocial well-being of conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that forced displacement has significant psychosocial consequences on conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria. The results showed a grand mean score of 4.11, indicating strong agreement among respondents that displacement negatively affects their psychological and emotional well-being. Specifically, trauma-related experiences, emotional distress, anxiety, low self-esteem, and social isolation emerged as the major psychosocial challenges confronting displaced youths. The highest mean score ($\bar{X} = 4.18$) was recorded for trauma-related experiences, suggesting that exposure to violence, insecurity, loss of family members, destruction of homes, and forced migration continues to have profound effects on the mental health of affected youths. This finding is consistent with the observations of Nigerian scholars who have argued that armed conflict and displacement often expose young people to traumatic experiences that undermine their emotional stability and psychological functioning. For instance, Adefolarin, Arulogun, Gershim, and Gureje (2021) noted that exposure to conflict situations frequently results in anxiety disorders, depression, emotional instability, and post-traumatic stress symptoms among displaced populations. Similarly, Eze (2023) observed that prolonged displacement often weakens the psychological resilience of young people, leading to persistent emotional distress and social withdrawal. The finding also supports the assertion of Nwankwo (2024) that displacement disrupts social support systems that ordinarily provide emotional security and psychological protection for adolescents and young adults. The result further revealed that emotional distress ($\bar{X} = 4.13$) and anxiety ($\bar{X} = 4.10$) are common experiences among displaced youths. This finding aligns with the work of Okoro (2024), who reported that uncertainty regarding safety, livelihood opportunities, education, and future aspirations often generates high levels of stress and anxiety among internally displaced persons in Nigeria.

The study also corroborates the findings of Yusuf (2022), who maintained that displaced youths frequently experience fear, hopelessness, and emotional instability due to prolonged exposure to insecurity and difficult living conditions within displacement camps and host communities. Another important finding of the study is that forced displacement contributes significantly to low self-esteem and social isolation among youths. This finding agrees with the work of Akinwale and Bello (2023), who found that displacement disrupts social relationships, weakens community ties, and reduces opportunities for social interaction, thereby affecting young people's confidence and sense of belonging. The loss of familiar social

environments, separation from peers, and stigmatization associated with displacement often create feelings of exclusion and social disconnection. Such experiences negatively affect personal identity formation and social adjustment among affected youths. The findings of this study also revealed that forced displacement has substantial educational consequences on conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria. The grand mean score of 4.15 indicates strong agreement among respondents that displacement significantly disrupts educational participation and learning outcomes. The highest mean score ($\bar{X} = 4.18$) was recorded for disruption of school attendance, suggesting that many displaced youths have experienced interruptions in their educational journey due to insecurity, relocation, destruction of educational facilities, and limited access to schools. This finding supports the position of Ogunode (2022), who argued that conflict-induced displacement remains one of the major barriers to educational access in Nigeria's conflict-prone regions. According to Ogunode, many displaced children and youths experience prolonged school closures, interrupted learning, and irregular attendance due to insecurity and inadequate educational infrastructure. Similarly, Olanrewaju et al. (2021) found that displacement often deprives learners of stable learning environments, thereby affecting continuity in education and reducing educational attainment. The study further found that forced displacement negatively affects academic performance ($\bar{X} = 4.17$). This result is consistent with the findings of Akanbi (2023), who reported that psychological trauma, emotional distress, and unstable learning conditions significantly reduce students' concentration, motivation, and academic achievement. The emotional burden associated with displacement often limits the ability of students to engage effectively in academic activities. This finding also agrees with the work of Nwankwo, Eze, and Okafor (2024), who established that adverse social and psychological experiences have direct implications for students' academic outcomes and educational success. The findings additionally revealed that displaced youths face serious challenges regarding access to learning materials and educational resources ($\bar{X} = 4.15$). This result corroborates the findings of Egielewa, Idogho, Iyalomhe, and Cirella (2021), who observed that many displaced learners lack adequate educational resources, including textbooks, digital learning devices, internet connectivity, and instructional materials necessary for effective learning. Such deficiencies contribute to poor academic performance and reduced educational opportunities. The study also found that forced displacement contributes to increased school dropout rates and negatively affects educational aspirations among affected youths. This finding aligns with the observations of Ebohon, Obienu, Irabor, and Amadin (2021), who reported that economic hardship, insecurity, family responsibilities, and prolonged displacement frequently force young people to abandon their education. The inability to continue schooling often diminishes future career prospects and limits opportunities for socioeconomic advancement. The hypothesis testing further revealed a statistically significant relationship between forced displacement and the psychosocial well-being of conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria. The

regression analysis produced a correlation coefficient of $R = 0.738$ and a coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.545$), indicating that approximately 54.5% of the variation in psychosocial well-being is explained by experiences of forced displacement. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.738$) and probability value ($p = 0.000$) confirmed that the relationship is statistically significant.

Conclusion

This paper set out to evaluate the psychosocial and educational consequences of forced displacement among conflict-affected youths in Northeast Nigeria, with particular attention to Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states – the epicenter of the Boko Haram/ISWAP-driven humanitarian crisis. The evidence assembled and analyzed across this paper supports the thesis advanced in the Introduction: that displacement has generated compounding psychosocial and educational crises for youths in this region; that these crises are mutually reinforcing in ways that amplify individual harm and societal risk; and that existing policy and programming responses, while earnest in design, have been inadequate in reach, integration, and resourcing to address the scale of documented need. The psychosocial consequences of displacement – manifesting as PTSD, depression, anxiety, grief, social disconnection, and impaired developmental trajectories – are not incidental features of the humanitarian landscape in Northeast Nigeria. They are predictable, well-documented outcomes of sustained exposure to violence, forced displacement, and the subsequent conditions of camp and host-community existence. They are also remediable: the evidence base from intervention research, while thin for this specific context, supports the feasibility and effectiveness of community-based, task-shifted, culturally adapted psychosocial support for displaced youths. The failure to scale such interventions is not a reflection of their impracticability but of inadequate political will and resource commitment.

The educational consequences are equally serious and similarly remediable. The destruction of school infrastructure and the displacement of the teacher workforce have denied millions of children their fundamental right to education. Yet communities in Northeast Nigeria have demonstrated remarkable agency in sustaining informal learning systems under extraordinarily difficult conditions – evidence that demand for education persists even when the formal system has collapsed. This demand must be met with commensurate supply: rebuilt schools, protected learning environments, trained teachers equipped with psychosocial skills, and accelerated learning pathways that provide genuine routes to credential attainment for youths who have lost years of formal schooling. The path forward requires an integrated approach that refuses to treat psychosocial support and educational recovery as parallel or separable endeavors. Schools are not merely sites of academic instruction; they are among the most powerful psychosocially protective

environments available to children, providing structure, peer connection, adult mentorship, and a sense of normalcy and future possibility. Investing in schools is investing in mental health, and investing in mental health is investing in the capacity of youths to engage with and benefit from schooling. The institutions with the mandate, resources, and reach to operationalize this integrated approach the Federal Government of Nigeria, UNICEF Nigeria, UNHCR Nigeria, the Borno State Ministry of Education, Save the Children Nigeria, and the International Rescue Committee must do so with the urgency and scale that the crisis demands.

Recommendations

Based on the evidence synthesized and the gaps identified in this paper, the following recommendations are advanced for the attention of specific institutional actors.

- i. The Federal Government should accelerate the full implementation of the National Mental Health Act (2022) and the 2023 National Mental Health Policy by establishing community mental health centers specifically serving IDP communities in Northeast Nigeria, with earmarked and protected budget lines. The EiE Framework should be operationalized through a dedicated funding mechanism, ensuring state accountability for EiE minimum standards compliance. A nationally coordinated interministerial task force on psychosocial and educational recovery for displaced youths comprising the Federal Ministries of Education, Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Women Affairs should be established with a mandate to develop longitudinal monitoring systems for displaced youths outcomes.
- ii. The Borno State Ministry of Education should commission a comprehensive, geo-referenced audit of school infrastructure status across all Local Government Areas, including areas currently inaccessible due to insecurity, to establish a credible baseline for reconstruction prioritization. Teacher recruitment and redeployment plans should target areas with the highest teacher-to-student deficits and integrate mandatory psychosocial support training into both initial teacher preparation and ongoing professional development. The Ministry should pilot a 'school as safe space' model – drawing on the integrated EiE/PSS approach evidenced in the GPE-funded intervention – in at least three high-displacement LGAs, with independent evaluation to generate transferable lessons.
- iii. UNICEF Nigeria should expand the coverage of its EiE programming in the BAY states beyond accessible urban and peri-urban centers, investing in context-appropriate delivery mechanisms – including mobile learning units, community learning centers, and remote teacher support systems – that can reach youths in displacement locations currently excluded from mainstream programming.

UNICEF should also commission a longitudinal cohort study tracking psychosocial and educational outcomes for a representative sample of displaced youths across at least three years, to generate the temporal data currently absent from the evidence base.

- iv. UNHCR Nigeria should systematically integrate psychosocial support assessments into its protection monitoring activities for IDPs in Northeast Nigeria, disaggregating findings by age, gender, and displacement duration to produce the granular evidence base required for targeted programming. UNHCR's durable solutions framework for the BAY states should explicitly address the psychosocial and educational reintegration needs of returnee youths a population of over two million individuals whose needs have been relatively neglected by developing specific guidance on educational re-enrollment support, credential recognition for learning completed in displacement, and trauma-informed community reintegration processes.

Save the Children Nigeria and the IRC should jointly invest in a rigorous, multi-site randomized or quasi-experimental evaluation of integrated MHPSS and EiE interventions for displaced youths in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states, with findings published in peer-reviewed journals and made openly available to address the critical gap in intervention effectiveness evidence. Both organizations should implement gender-transformative programming specifically designed to address the compounding vulnerabilities of displaced girls, including community-based advocacy to counter school exclusion norms, safe spaces for girl-led learning and support, and economic empowerment components for caregivers that reduce household pressure on girls to exit school.

- v. Scholars working on displacement, mental health, and education in sub-Saharan Africa should prioritize longitudinal study designs, gender-disaggregated analysis, and methodological innovation in the measurement of culturally specific idioms of distress among Northeast Nigerian populations. Partnerships between Nigerian universities including the University of Maiduguri and the University of Jos and international research institutions should be supported to build the local research capacity required to generate and interpret evidence that is both scientifically rigorous and contextually grounded.

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