Prereturn Assessment of Socioeconomic and Infrastructure Needs and Provision: Do they Guarantee Willingness to Return among Displaced Persons in Nigeria?

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1.0 Introduction

North-East Nigeria was in great turmoil between 2009 and 2020 through the insurgency activities of the dreaded terrorist group, Boko Haram. During the peak of their destructive and destabilizing activities between 2013 and 2021, more than 2.5 million Nigerians were displaced, many of whom took residence at various internally displaced persons (IDP) camps across states in North-East Nigeria. While thousands of others take residence with families and friends at host communities across the Northeastern States, more than one million others sought refuge in neighbouring Cameroon, Niger and Chad. Since 2021, peace calmly returned to the region, and the Nigerian Government asked the Conflict-induced Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to return home and promised that they would do the needful to make their return sustainable. Similar studies in the past have established the fact that return can only be sustainable if returnees are assisted with economic needs, social networking and psychological assistance (Adekola et al., 2024; Adekola et al., 2022; Reuben et al.et al., 2009). The study by Reuben et al. (2009), which adopted mixed methods to examine the determinants of the embeddedness of forced return migrants from six countries: Afghanistan, Armenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Vietnam, found unique demands that make return migration sustainable. The study found that successful return is contingent upon returnees receiving employment assistance, having access to free or subsidized housing and having freedom of social contact. Studies on prereturn assessment of needs and post-return sustainable livelihoods are scarce in Nigeria, and to fill this important research gap, this study is designed to find empirical answers to the following two research questions. One, what socioeconomic needs are of highest priority to displaced persons in Nigeria to encourage return to their communities? Two, to what extent does restoration of destroyed social infrastructure in their communities encourage them to return home? The study, therefore, intends to do a prereturn assessment of the socioeconomic and infrastructure needs of the CIDP**s** in Northeastern Nigeria so that their return can be sustainable if relevant stakeholders meet such needs. This paper, therefore, attempts a prereturn assessment of the socioeconomic and infrastructure needs, ranked in order of priority, which may induce willingness for a voluntary return among the CIDPs.

2.0 Theoretical Underpinning: The Push-Pull Model

Theoretical discussions on return migration have commanded attention in the last few decades from social sciences disciplines, especially human geography and sociology. Traditional migration theories, particularly the push and pull theory, offer insights into the individual motivations for migrating. People's decisions to migrate are influenced by push and pull factors, which drive attraction to or dispersal from a location. These factors encompass economic, political, cultural, and environmental elements. Given that this study focuses on assessing the socioeconomic and infrastructural factors that may encourage CIDPs to return home voluntarily, it is fitting to adopt the Push–Pull Migration Model (PPMM) as the theoretical framework for this research. Push factors are life circumstances that create dissatisfaction with one's current location, while pull factors are the attributes of a location that make it appear attractive (Dorigo & Tobler, 1983). The concept of push factors was initially outlined by Ravenstein (1885) in his pioneering research presented to the Royal Statistical Society. However, the categorization by Unguren et al. (2021), dividing them into economic, social-cultural, and political factors, appears very apt. The application of this theory and subsequent analytical discussion focus on these two broad factors.

3.0 **Data and Methods**

This research adopts a cross-sectional quantitative research design. The data was gathered primarily with the aid of structured and open-ended questionnaires administered to Conflict-induced Internally Displaced Persons (CIDP) across eight systematically selected IDP camps in North-East Nigeria, where the Boko Haram insurgency activities have led to the displacement of more than 2.5 million people since 2010. The questionnaire was in four sections, numbered A to D. Section A concentrated on the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents. In section B, respondents were asked to tick on a range of 1-12, which social needs are likely to aid their willingness to return and ensure sustainable livelihood even after the return. This was recoded into four groups, namely, groups 1-3, which stand for needs that are not of priority to their willingness to return, while groups 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12 stand for needs that are of low, high and highest priorities to their willingness to return. After this, they were also asked to list any other needs that may induce their willingness to return and live well, but they were not listed among the ones selected in the table. The idea of the highest priority is to examine from CiIDP the variables without which willingness to

return as well as sustainable return is not achievable at all. This would guide the Government in prioritizing the provision of socioeconomic needs in the face of limited resources. The IDPs are temporarily housed at various camps in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States in North-East Nigeria as they expect peace restoration in their communities so they can go home. The displaced persons interviewed are 15 years old and above, male and female, and are mature enough to know and mention the socioeconomic and infrastructure needs that would induce them to return home and make the return sustainable.

To avoid bias in sample size selection, all the IDP camps recognized by the Government and humanitarian organizations as of 2018 when this data was gathered were arranged as seen in Table 1.

Table 1 IDP Camps in North-East Nigeria and the Numbers of IDPs in Each

S/N	Names and Locations of IDP Camps	The population of IDPs in each Camp
IDPs CAMPS IN ADAMAWA STATE		
1	Damare Camp, Fufore LGA	1845
2	Angwan Kara Camp, Girei LGA	784
3	Malkohi Camp, Yola South LGA	1491
	Total Number of IDPs in Adamawa State	**4,120**
IDPs CAMPS IN BORNO STATE		
1	NYSC Camp Maiduguri	5,587
2	Chad Basin Camp, Bornu State	5,336
3	Government Girls' College, Maiduguri	4,750
4	Dalori I & II IDPs Camp	7,500
5	Government Girls' Secondary School, Yelwa	5, 681
6	Government Girls' Secondary School, Biu	2,250
7	Bakasi/Farm Centre IDPs Camp	6000
8	Government Secondary School, Maiduguri	3,352
9	Wulari IDP Camp, Maiduguri	9021
10	Shetima Ali Monguno IDPs Camp	2000
11	Sanda Kyarimi Secondary School	1003
12	Ngomari Gana Primary School	2,700
	Total Number of IDPs in Borno State	**55,180**
IDPs CAMPS IN YOBE STATE		
1	Sabonsara IDPs Camp, Potiskum LGA	651
2	Pompomari Primary School Camp, Gubja LGA	1850
3	YBC Camp, Damaturu LGA	9036
	Estimated Total Number of IDPs in Yobe State	**11, 536**
Estimated Grand total for Adamawa, Borno, Yobe States		**70, 837**

Sources: IOM, 2018; Enitan-Matthews, 2014 (as supplied by NEMA)

The total population of IDPs in these camps was 34,110, which serves as the target population for this study. However, to effectively determine the sample size, the formula below was adopted from the works of Phrasisombath (2009). This formula is useful in social sciences and public health when the target population is already known.

$$n = \frac{NZ^2\alpha/_2\, P(1-P)}{e^2 \quad (N-1) + NZ^2\alpha/_2 \ (1-P)} \quad \text{……ii}$$

In the formula, n is the sample size, N is the target population, P is the estimated proportion of the population that represents the characteristics, p is 0.05, and $Z\alpha/_2$ is the level of statistical significance according to the standard normal distribution. For a confidence level of 95%, which is conventional, Z= 1.96. Finally, e is the tolerated margin error. As the level of precision, e is considered 0.01 to produce good precision and minor errors in the estimate.

Applying this formula, therefore, the sample size is computed thus;

$$n = \frac{34{,}110(1.96^2) * 0.05(1-0.05)}{0.01^2(34{,}110-1) + 1.96^2(1-0.05)} \quad \text{…… iii}$$

This gives a total of approximately 928. Therefore, the sample size for this study was theoretically put at 928 CIDP who were selected from IDP camps in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States based on the sampling procedures described in Table 2. Having synthesized the statistics, a systematic sampling method was used to select the 1st and the third camps for Adamawa State, the 1st, 4th, 7th and 10th camps for Borno State and the 1st and third camps for Yobe State as listed in Table 2. This implies that eight (8) IDP camps were systematically selected for sampling: two in Adamawa State, four in Borno State and two in Yobe State.

Therefore, the total number of questionnaires that were administered in each IDP camp based on the 928 sample size was included in Table 2 using a proportional sampling technique in each IDP camp.

When this target population (34,110 IDPs) was divided by a sample size of 928, it gave a score of 36.8. This implies that approximately one IDP per 37 IDPs in the North-East was interviewed for this study. This is representative enough, considering that most IDPs have similar challenges and express similar needs. The time spent with each respondent ranged from 20 to 35 minutes, depending on the level of literacy and language barrier between the researcher and each respondent. To ease the challenge of language barrier between the researcher and the respondents, the services of two field assistants who could speak Hausa and English Language effectively were sought. Data was collected for a period of about 20 weeks (5 months) between May and October 2018.

Note: The full paper discusses in detail the validity and reliability of the research instrument and results. It also considers other ethical considerations. The full article also explains the variables measured and how the binary logistics regression was arrived at.

4.0 The Results in Brief

4.1 Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The data were cleaned after the fieldwork. Out of the 928 questionnaires administered to the displaced persons in the eight camps, 866 were found eligible and useful, representing a 93.3% response rate. All the analyses in this paper are done on this number.

Note: The sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents have been fully discussed with tables in the full paper.

4.2 Meeting of the Socioeconomic Needs of CIDP and Willingness to Return

Based on previous studies, a list of socioeconomic needs which may induce the displaced persons to desire a return home was listed and presented to them to rank in order of priority. This is why it is called prereturn needs assessment; these needs were presented to them in their camps before they returned. These needs, as shown in Table 4, are some of those needs which have been found to induce displaced persons to voluntarily return home to other places. There are four categories of the ranking of the needs. Each of the fifteen needs has four ranking categories, from not a priority to highest priority, depending on how important the displaced persons think they are in inducing a desire to return. The comprehensive responses of the displaced persons are recorded in Table 4 and depicted in Figure 1. However, only the results of the first four needs that are of the highest priority and the last four of the lowest priority for the return of the displaced shall be concentrated. The displaced persons see the reintegration of financial assistance (89.4), the opening of commercial centres (87%), assurance of human security (85%) and the reopening of damaged medical facilities (83.1%) as the needs that are of the highest priority to their return. According to them, if these needs are met, they will all voluntarily return to their communities immediately. On the other hand, the displaced persons perceive participation in sporting activities, cultural events, social network access, and political leadership as the least important needs towards returning to their communities. They do not see these as priorities at all because they share a very good bond among themselves in their camps, so belonging is not a problem.

Table 4. Ranking of Socioeconomic Needs for Willingness to Return by CIDP

Socioeconomic Needs	Not a Priority		Low Priority		High Priority		Highest Priority		Total	
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
Reintegration Financial Assistance	27	3.1	5	0.6	60	6.9	774	89.4	866	100
Opening of Commercial Centres	25	2.9	24	2.8	64	7.4	753	87.0	866	100
Human Security	21	2.4	4	0.5	105	12.1	736	85.0	866	100
Functioning medical facilities	27	3.1	8	0,9	111	12.8	720	83.1	866	100
Housing/accommodation	35	4.0	41	4.7	73	8.4	717	82.8	866	100
Opening of schools	22	2.5	7	0.8	122	14.1	715	82.6	866	100
Skill acquisition/Vocational training	21	2.4	27	3.1	104	12.0	714	82.4	866	100
Access to former landed property	27	3.1	6	0.7	163	18.8	670	77.4	866	100
Employment/Job Opportunities	26	3.0	53	6.1	155	17.9	632	73.0	866	100
Subsidized Agric Implements& seedling	26	3.0	53	6.1	155	17.9	632	73.0	866	100
Rehabilitation for the physically injured	35	4.0	60	6.9	176	20.3	595	68.7	866	100
Participation in sporting activities	292	33.7	202	23.3	239	27.6	133	15.4	866	100
Participation in cultural events	150	17.3	353	40.4	245	28.3	118	13.6	866	100
Access to social network	153	17.7	390	45.0	219	25.3	104	12.0	866	100
Political leadership	367	42.4	247	28.5	162	18.7	90	10.4	866	100

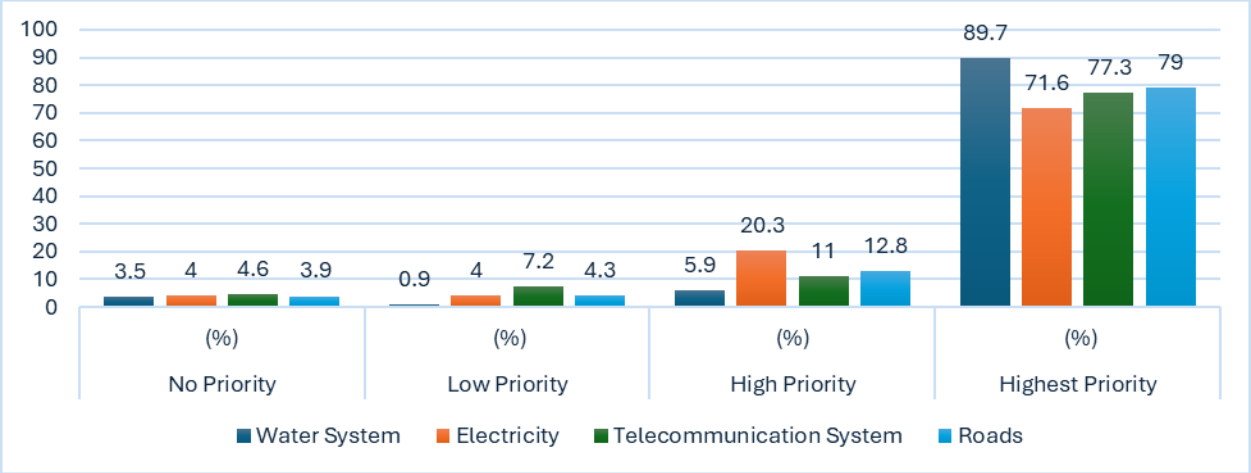
Source: Author's computation, 2024.

Note: The remaining parts of this result here are in the full paper

4.3 Meeting of the Infrastructure Needs of CIDP and Willingness to Return

A list of social infrastructure was also presented to the displaced persons to rank according to their level of priority as they prepare to return to their communities. The infrastructure was just four in number based on what was available in those communities prior to the displacement. These include electricity, telecommunication systems, access roads, and water systems. It is worthy of note that these social infrastructures were destroyed by the Boko Haram insurgencies at the peak of their activities between 2013 and 2018 when North-East Nigeria was literally burning.

Figure 3



Electricity poles were pulled down, and many transformers were blown up, throwing many of the towns in darkness. Many telecommunication masts were also not spared, cutting off telephone communication in many communities. The heavy equipment of the Boko Haram insurgency destroyed many roads linking villages and farms, and many bridges collapsed. So, it became necessary for some of those infrastructure to be repaired or replaced as the displaced prepare to return home. So, the infrastructure was presented to the displaced persons to be ranked according to their level of priority before returning. Restoration of water sources and making water available was ranked the highest (89.7%) among the displaced persons. This is followed by the reconstruction or rehabilitation of access roads (79%) and telecommunication, respectively. Lastly, the displaced persons ranked electricity to command 71.6% as a priority for them to return home voluntarily.

Figure 4 and the remaining part of the results are in the full paper

3.4 Logistics Regression Estimating the Odds of Willingness to Return on Respondents' Selected Socioeconomic Needs

The influence of the provision of selected socioeconomic needs was also examined on the willingness of the CIDPs to return home through binary logistics regression. The selected socioeconomic variables used to control for willingness to return here are ten in number, and they include access to former landed property, skill acquisition, human security, opening of schools, functioning medical facilities, housing, rehabilitation for the physically injured, reintegration, financial assistance, employment and opening of commercial centres. Table 5 shows the odds ratio of the regression model of our main hypothesis in this manuscript. The odds ratio column indicates the change in the predictor variable.

Regression results in Table 5 show that CIDPs who said that having access to their former landed property is of the highest priority to their willingness for reintegration are 0.50 times less likely to desire a return than those who said that it was not a priority. There is also no significant relationship between this and their desire for return (OR 0.50; P >0.05). However, those who said that access to former landed property is of high priority to their willingness to return home are 11.6 times more willing to return home than those who said that it was not a priority. CIDPs who said that skill acquisition is the highest priority for them to be willing to return are 1.17 times more likely to return than those who said it was not a priority. Also, those who said that skill acquisition was of high priority to their return are 1.42 times more likely to be willing to return. In contrast, those who said that skill acquisition is of low priority are 0.1 times less likely to be willing to return to their communities.

NOTE: The full paper is ready, but I tried to reduce things due to the restriction to four pages given as an instruction on the submission page