

Resilience and Gender Dynamics in Displacement: Examining the Coping Strategies of Women in Internally Displaced Persons Camps

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Abstract

Women living in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps have a dual role of survival and enduring systemic inequality that not only takes them out of their homes, but also affects the regulatory structures of sociocultural power and agency. The purpose of this study is threefold: to identify the gendered impact of displacement and to determining the nature of coping strategy of women of IDP camps in Northern Nigeria. It looks at how displacement transforms the traditional gender relations, reviews the levels of gender-based violence (GBV), and discusses coping measures like economic activity and social connections. A purposive sampling method was used to select 67 participants for interviewing, participating in focus groups, and observing. Using the thematic analysis, we identified what women's experiences primarily reflect economic existence, social support, and gender roles. The paper establishes that displacement has actually changed the gender roles whereby women now take up economic responsibilities previously done by men. Although there is improved resilience through informal economic activities, women in these camps are still at the receiving end of GBV. Strong synergy with collective action as well as a spirit of togetherness is well advocated by female groups in aspects of improving their quality of life. But, these transformations are not enough to disrupt the tendency of patriarchal structural domination. The study concludes by advocating policy and program initiatives to respond to the menace of GBV and promote women's economic rights. International humanitarian organizations and governments should improve camp security, offer long-term skill development, as well as strengthen the women's organizing capacity. This paper therefore focuses on how empowerment and powerlessness coexist within IDP camps to illustrate how women contend with captivity while also subverting patriarchal systems. Accordingly, the study offers valuable contribution to understanding the nexus among gender, power, and resilience in IDP camps.

Keywords: Displacement, Gender-based violence, Resilience Internally displaced women, Social networks, Economic empowerment

Introduction

Refugee, internally displaced, forced migration and other phenomena that result from the uprooting of populations due to conflict or political and environmental crises are complex and devastating processes, often exacerbated by existing gender inequalities. Due to these reasons, women, especially those from conflict zone such as Northern Nigeria, are most affected in their bid to negotiate the different hurdles of life within the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. Not only does displacement deprive people of physical dwelling, but it also erases the sociocultural context that defines their position, rank, and occupation. These disruptions are on a larger scale more pronounced for women as they continue to be subordinate in patriarchal structures and are in economic dependency that limits their control over resources, power, and agency. These women become displaced, leading to additional risks including poor economic status, social exclusion, and high rates of Gender based violence (GBV). Nonetheless, this study's findings show that women in the IDP camps are very strong and use many coping strategies that are evident of their strength and flexibility.

The effect of the Boko Haram insurgency in Northern Nigeria is one of the severest humanitarian disasters in the modern Nigeria which has forced millions of people from their homes. In this context, women form part of the vulnerable groups that have been affected by displacements. Their experiences in the camps are thus shaped by the short-term consequences of conflict as well as the long-term effects of displacement. Here, traditional frameworks of social organization have broken down in the camps to the point that the future of the displaced women is at risk and at the same time full of potential. These women are exposed to new forms of risks that include rape, prostitution, and low employment opportunities. Disruption of the conventional gender norms affords selected women the chance to engage in new avenues of productivity, to participate in informal economies, and to become vital to the design and implementation of community resilience projects. The paradox of vulnerability and power is thus the key to understanding gender relations in IDP camps and why such changes need to be examined in order to understand how displacement femininities and masculinities are gendered.

One of the many challenges that displaced women face when in IDP camps is the high propensity of GBV. Many works have proven that refugees and IDPs are at a higher risk of sexual violence, human trafficking, and domestic abuse, and, in many cases, the focus is on women (e.g., Capasso et al., 2022; Ajayi, 2020). More often than not, these acts of violence are perpetrated not only by the warring factions, but other displaced population, humanitarian workers, and even security forces as well. The lack of protective measures in the camps only worsens the situation and makes women virtually devoid of ways to receive justice or help. Violence remains a significant determinant of psychological, physical and social impact since violence is a traumatic process. Nevertheless, abused displaced women develop coping strategies, often based on community and compass, and often through organized efforts. Through the formation of women support groups within the camps, women are able to share their experiences, to use informal safety networks, and lobby for better living condition. These groups operate as a form of resistance against the debilitating effects of displacement because in a group of women, their rights are reclaimed and asserted in a context where they are often relegated to nothingness.

Poverty is one of the major issues affecting the lives of displaced women in the IDP camps. Destruction of employment opportunities together with limited choice of economic activities within the camps leads to many women struggling to meet their basic needs. This

economic vulnerability often puts women in precarious working sectors—for instance, small business ventures or domestic labor, making them more vulnerable to further abuse (Adhikari, 2020; Rwigema et al., 2023). Despite such limitations, the economic activities assumed act as a viable way through which these women survive. Economic activities in the informal sector enable the women to generate income, to be financially independent, and to support their families. At times, it regenerates the economically involved women's power as they perform the roles that were previously assigned to men in their pre-displacement societies (Borges, 2024). This economic capacity development is often compromised by structural barriers vis-à-vis IDP camps, having unfair share and access to resources, restricted movement, and bias in assistance provision.

Women's resilience is not only the ability to survive economic hardship or defend themselves against attacks, but also manifests in the manner in which they manage to adapt to new sociable roles and positions within families and societies. Social displacement makes women take up leadership responsibilities within their families and societies (Boulaalam and El Hannach, 2024). This change is partly forced as the employment shortage which results from many men being occupied in combat or killed means that women must take up work they would not have done prior to migration. But, it also portrays the resilience and flexibility of such women who manage the affairs of a camp and their morality and agency. Women living in IDP camps are grouped into community based organizations and networks which fosters their strength and fight for the vulnerable. These networks also help women deal with the micro problems of displacement and, at the same time, come out as advocates for their rights in the camps and improve living standards in those settings.

This article therefore looks into the coping mechanisms used by the women in the IDP camps with a focus on the effect of displacement on women's decision making power and roles. In an effort to deepen the understanding on how gender complicates the effects of displacement and the ways in which women cope with hardship, this paper also examines the notions of gender, resilience, and displacement. In view of this, this article seeks to examine the coping behaviors used by displaced women employing both feminism and resilience perspectives. It looks specifically at micro processes including economic measures like microfinance and macro processes like activism and organizing in the apropos how they destabilize gender norms. It also analyzes how societal structures further disabled women from building their own resilience in the IDP camps through social exclusion, provision of resources, and violence against them. It further demonstrates how women fight and counter these challenges through struggles and creativity. The overall purpose of this study is therefore to explore the gendered effects of displacement and present recommendations that organizations and governments should consider in planning interventions that are more sensitive to gender in conflict regions.

Thus, the major objective of this paper is to delineate how displacement reshapes gender relations. Correspondingly, the general research question that guides this investigation is the following: How does displacement reshape gender relations? These two aspects (i.e. the objective and the general research question) are quite significant because they will guide the research process by determining the appropriate methods, data collection strategies, and analytical techniques, thereby ensuring the research stays focused and avoids completely different lines of thought or actions, while allowing for the effective evaluation of the findings.

Literature Review

The review of works on resilience, gender, and displacement leads to a significant amount of literature that explores how displaced women adapt to the socioeconomic, psychological and physical barriers experienced in IDP camps. Women are the most affected due to displacement and this has been realized through the following verity: women displaced due to conflict are confronted with patriarchal demands, lack of economic agency, and GBV. Accordingly, the review approach used here is synchronic/thematic: i.e. the various themes in the relevant literature are delineated and discussed, albeit without not segmented into subsections.

To begin with, according to Ajayi (2020), women in conflict situations are usually the first to suffer the social system breakdown impacts because displacement disrupts the normal familial and social roles they play, at the same time as their risks for physical, economic and psychological violence increase. The present paper focuses on the following issues: risks and gendered vulnerabilities, coping strategies, and the relation of economic and social capital to resilience among displaced women.

Next, high rates of GBV remain an endemic risk for displaced women in the camps. Studies also show that the occurrence of conflicts increases the vulnerability of women to become victims of sexual violence, trafficking, forced marriage, and domestic abuse (Capasso et al., 2022; Akik et al., 2020). Insurgency by Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria has brought about increased aggression against women with cases of abductions and sexual violations, and most evidently in Borno State (Ahmed et al., 2024). This violence displaces women in the IDP camps making them vulnerable for other violations internally within the camps and externally by other actors. Ahmad and Iqbal (2022) reveal that due to inadequate protection measures in IDP camps, the risk of violence against women continues as well as survivors having few legal options and limited access to psychological help. This underlines the necessity of increasing the protection needs in IDP camps and including the strengthened safeguard measures, legal assistance services, mental health, and programs tailored for the displaced women.

Also, displaced women experience economic vulnerability in addition to physical violence because of their displacement. Loss of traditional ways of earning a living and limited opportunities to get a formal job in IDP camps push many women into seeking informal and inferior income-generating activities. The women undertake petty trading, housekeeping, and especially artistic productions that enable them to be financially independent; in the process, they remain easily exploitable and economically insecure (Adhikari, 2020). Economic independence remains to be one of the key strategies through which displaced women modify the reality of their lives while providing for their families. Research shows that in these informal economies, women receive positive impacts including the power of decision-making in the family and an improved rank in the society, etc. (Amodu et al., 2020). Despite the economic possibilities of generating income for the displaced women, their possibilities are still limited by structural factors such as poor and unfair distribution of aid, insecurity, and low availability of credit and capital (Borges, 2024).

In addition, in this study, social networks and collective action are significantly and positively related to improving the level of resilience among displaced women. Female heads of households in the IDP camps therefore form informal support structures in the form of groups that provide emotional, material and social support to enable them to cope with the challenges of living in the camps. It can exist in the form of women's organizations, saving and credit associations, or as informal security, health and education protection committees operational

within the camps (Khan & White, 2023). According to Abdi et al. (2023), social networks are critical sources of the positive psychological wellbeing of displaced populations, particularly women who are most vulnerable to social exclusion. These networks help women to deal with the emergent concerns of displacement and also work as a voice and a protest against such circumstances. Women's groups in IDP camps have been very active in the public space demanding changes in their living conditions, basic service delivery, and protection from gender based violence by always working hand in hand with non-governmental agencies (NGOs) and humanitarian organizations (Pak et al., 2023).

Furthermore, in showing that cultural resilience is a major part of the strategies that displaced women use in order to deal with displacement challenges, this paper thus makes a contribution to the existing literature. Spirituality, culture and indigenous knowledge systems are kept alive through them as they act as the pillars for many women in this context of displacement. Aham-Chiabuotu (2019) noted that the role of spirituality in helping the displacement women to overcome the psychological and emotional impact of displacement as part of a conceptual and theological understanding to cope with suffering. Of course, there are losses—identity is lost, the roles and relationships of the community are lost—and their cultural practices in the form of storytelling, rituals, and communal gatherings help them to maintain social order and continuity during displacement (Shallangwa & Tijani, 2020). Nonetheless, such cultural practices may at the same time reassert patterns of male dominance and limitations that women have in decision-making. Culturally sanctioned restrictions relating to the Nigeria's northern region's women's mobility and education also hinder their ability to take leadership roles or pursue economic opportunities in the camps (Shallangwa, 2021). The clash of the cultural preservation of women and their rights is evident in this situation.

Moreover, the literature on resilience and displacement also emphasizes the role of external support networks in improving the resilience of women. Person-oriented as well as community-level approaches are pivotal; nonetheless, system- and structure-oriented approaches also play a vital role in helping displaced women to deal with the consequences of displacement. Government policies, humanitarian assistance programs, and the laws that will help women in terms of their needs in the event that they are displaced are vital to ensure that women can survive (Gupta et al., 2023). Many programs aiming at providing vocational training, micro financing, and legal protection against GBV have realized a marked improvement in the coping abilities of displaced women especially in countries experiencing post-conflict calamities (Akilova et al., 2022). These interventions are often rendered ineffective by corruption, lack of efficiency, and poor coordination among humanitarian agencies; many displaced women are therefore not able to get the kind of support they need to rebuild their lives (Mohammed, 2022).

Finally, the body of knowledge in the field of gender, resilience, and displacement provides enough knowledge on the different forms of adversity faced by displaced women and the ways in which they manage these adversities. Women refugees are at high risk of being abused; they lack financial stability and have limited social interaction. Nevertheless, they can be seen to be remarkably resourceful, as they are involved in irregular, informal markets, social relations, and culture. It is only through a critical appraisal of these observations that one can appreciate the need to adopt an appropriate multi-level approach in managing displaced women with regard to individual psychological factors, community assets and resources, and institutional responses. This paper therefore adds to the available literature by suggesting ways via which to improve the humanitarian assistance provided to IDP camps through recognizing that displacement is a gendered process and that women are particularly vulnerable.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework utilized to ground this study comprises of an amalgamation of Feminist Theory, Intersectionality Theory, and Resilience Theory in order to improve the knowledge of gendered lives of women in IDP camps. In this analysis, Feminist Theory is crucial for explaining the role of patriarchy and gender power relations in the displacement of women. As observed earlier, displacement in conflict areas such as Northern Nigeria makes already vulnerable women groups more vulnerable to vices including violence, economic marginalization, and social isolation (Ajayi, 2020). Feminist Theory presupposes that gendered patterns are evidence of broader patriarchal systems that limit women's opportunities for resource access, decision-making power, and mobility (Bell et al., 2020). Hence, in the IDP camps, power relations are reproduced, thereby exposing women to numerous problems related to displacement including GBV, lack of employment opportunities, and social exclusion (Capasso et al., 2022).

Intersectionality Theory, which is part of the Feminist Theory, enhances this understanding because women's displacement experience is shaped by ethnicity, class, religious, or age, among other factors (Few-Demo & Allen, 2020). Consequently, the vulnerability of women in IDP camps is a function of their gender together with other structural positions within the society. These women face a number of challenges in their attempts to access assistance, support services, and protection in the camps, especially those women from low ethnic or low-income status. Intersectionality gives a clear yet complex perspective on how different kinds of prejudices and exclusions make the lives of displaced women worse but at the same time takes into account the variety of ways in which displaced women become empowered. An analysis of the experience of displaced women can be done with the help of Resilience Theory, which discusses the ways of dealing with the difficulties encountered. The definition of resilience is about the capacity of a person to bounce back from a misfortune, to cope with stress, and to maintain or regain his/her purpose and authority in overcoming adverse situations (Schwarzer, 2024). Resilience in displacement means not only the ability to build a life when the cards are heavily stacked against you, but also the ability to thrash out the challenge and turn it into an opportunity for change, power, and agency (Fennig & Denov, 2022). Resilience Theory makes a clear stand on the fact that there are protective factors that can help the victims of displacement manage the issues resulting from the displacement. Spoken and unspoken activators are crucial for displaced women since they improve individual and collective coping by providing resources, social capital, and support for the necessities of disclosing the harm and dysphonia caused by displacement (Khan & White, 2023).

In this study, resilience is defined as a change process that involves actors as well as structures. In terms of gender roles, both Feminist Theory and Resilience Theory reflect women's agency; show how women, after displacement, act to protect their families; provide for their needs; and fight for their rights and those of their families, often in ways that challenge traditional gender roles (Borges, 2024). IDP women are players in change and, contrary to being mere victims of displacement challenges, they embrace transformational roles to address displacement adversity and advocate for larger social change. Informality and social networks mean that women can gain back control and agency in spite of the severe limitations of the IDP camps (Adhikari, 2020). This theoretical framework is focused on gender, resilience, and agency, which will allow examining the situation and personal management of displaced women.

This study uses a resilience framework whereby resilience is viewed as a multi-faceted

phenomenon involving individual, community, and structural aspects. As this study has shown, there are multiple facets of experiences of women displaced in IDP camps; thus, their resilience reflects individual coping, social support and structural environments. Using the sources of resilience, this framework enables the consideration of woman's capacity not only to survive but also to live a fulfilling life under conditions of displacement.

Personal resilience refers to the ways that displaced women use to deal with the often stressful situation linked to displacement. This includes cognitive restructuring, handling of emotions, and the use of the spirit or faith to work through cases (Aham-Chiabuotu, 2019). Most of the women in the IDP camps are able to find meaning in suffering and survival through religion and spirituality. Women engage in paid work in small-scale trading, artisanal work, and other income-earning activities in order to feed their families and maintain their independence (Adhikari, 2020). Perseverance as a personal resource is a function of psychological, economic and spiritual capital that strengthens women's ability to deal with displacement.

Community resilience is defined as the processes by which camp residents organize themselves as well as the means of support they provide to one another in coping with the problems of living in camps. Despite their high risk, displaced women often form various forms of support group such as women's associations, saving and sharing groups, or mutual help associations that provide material, emotional and social support (Khan & White, 2023). These networks are critical for the positive stance of women on solidarity and collective action, a means of garnering political power and membership, protection from violence, and better living conditions. Community resources are vital at those times when official institutions and services are not able to provide the necessary level of support and protection and when displaced women need a different form of support. In this case, informal networks are effective as a working ground for women leadership and activism to convene and work together in order to address issues faced in the camps.

Structural capacities relate to the outside arrangement that provides the opportunities of displaced women to cope with their circumstances. People displaced must be able to receive humanitarian assistance and legal and social services that are relevant to refugees and IDPs (Gupta et al., 2023). Structural resilience is shaped by NGOs, international agencies, and local governments that provide resources such as healthcare, education and vocational training (Akilova et al., 2022). Structural resilience is often undermined by the lack of sound policies, bribery, and poor the implementation of aid leading to situations whereby many displaced women fail to rebuild their lives (Mohammed, 2022). This dimension of resilience therefore highlights the centrality of institutional and structural measures in intervening in women's resilience because individual- and community-based interventions often fail in addressing systemic issues related to displacement.

The resilience framework provides a tenable perspective of the strategies that displaced women have used in IDP camps while facing various challenges. This framework also highlights the need for multi-level interventions when addressing the needs of displaced women through reviewing the resilience levels at the individual and community as well as at structural levels. It also emphasizes the need for gender sensitive policies, programs, and intervention for women displaced via conflict by implementing and supporting policies that address their risks and capabilities.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research approach in looking at resilience practices and gender

relations of the women living in IDP camps in Northern Nigeria. This requires a qualitative approach because the study seeks to capture the phenomenology of displaced women, their strategies of coping with displacement, and how displacement alters gender power relations. It utilizes interviews, focus group discussions (FDGs), and participant observation in understanding the multifaceted approaches that displaced women use and the experiences they undergo regarding displacement due to the Boko Haram conflict.

The study employs a case study research strategy focusing on camps that accommodate IDPs in Borno State, Nigeria. Cohort studies enable the exploration of the specific context under which displaced women find themselves and the effects of displacement conditions on their resilience patterns. A case study allows for the comprehensive understanding of the specific difficulties faced by women in these camps and also provides information about how women rebuild themselves in the context of the sociopolitical environment of Northern Nigeria. According to Schoch (2020), conducting case study research is suitable for studying multiple social issues because it provides a rich contextual analysis of the processes at work.

In this study, purposive sampling method was used in order to access participants in the study whereby a diverse group of women in the camps was targeted in terms of age, marital status, economic status of the family, and ethnic background. The sampling approach was based on intersectionality since women in displacement are affected by various factors simultaneously (Few-Demo & Allen, 2020). Twenty-seven women completed one-on-one interviews and 40 women took part in five FDGs, each involving eight women. The goal was to gather different opinions regarding changes in women's roles, responsibilities, ways of adaptation due to displacement and, at the same time, determine the common concerns of different groups. The number of participants was determined based on Adhikari (2021) who states that, qualitative studies employing in-depth interviews commonly need at least 20-30 participants to achieve data saturation.

For data collection, the major instruments used included semi-structured interviews, FDGs, and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews allowed for a more detailed investigation of each participant's experiences through the flexibility in the interview process to follow up on certain themes or issues as explored during interviews (Naz et al., 2022). Some of the sensitive issues covered in the interviews were on women's displacement, their ways of coping, the difficulties faced in camps, and the role and decision-making power affected by displacement within families and communities.

FDGs were used in order to obtain shared perceptions of those who have suffered from forced migration and their coping strategies. The discussions established space for women to voice themselves, talk about their experiences, and think about how they relate to change as a result of displacement. By the same token, Colom (2022) notes that FDGs are ideal in understanding group processes and how personal processes are affected by other people's behavior. This research shows how FDGs exposed the ways developed by females to cope with displacement through the establishment of informal support groups and collective actions to address issues like GBV and economic hardships.

Participant observation was also used to capture the day-to-day social lives of women in the camps and some of their social interactions with other people in the camps, the camp authorities and the aid gives as well as their relatives. Observation provided information on the social relationships and ways of managing difficulties that may be missed by interviews and FDGs. Through this method, we were also able to note non-verbal signs and gestures that explain other aspects of the women's coping mechanisms, their mobility within the camps, roles in

households, and how they support one another during emergencies (Dosek, 2021).

Data analysis is defined as the process through which data collected is processed in order to generate useful information required in making decisions. Interviews, FDGs, and participant observation were analyzed for themes using the coding and pattern identification suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) for the analysis of qualitative data. Thematic analysis was chosen as it is sensitive to the nature of the essential data type and because it allows for the flexible and systematic examination of the rich narrative accounts of participants and the extraction of the salient themes and subthemes. The analytical process comprised multiple stages: data familiarization, initial codes identification, theme search, theme inspection, theme identification and labeling, and findings documentation. Some codes were deductive while others emerged from the data collected during the study as inductive codes. Qualitative data were managed using NVivo software to help organize and analyze the data as they reflect gender issues, resilience, and coping strategies. This paper therefore discusses the kind of challenges faced by women and girls in the IDP camps and their coping mechanisms drawing gender power dynamics, culture, and structures (Francis et al., 2021). Accordingly, the focus was on the role of the sociopolitical environment of displacement in the reinforcement or negation of women's resilience and the role of informal social networks, economic engagements, and collective action for improving resilience.

The issue of ethics was highly significant since the study was conducted among a vulnerable population. To conduct the research in an ethical manner, the following measures were observed: informed consent for all participants, anonymity, and potential harm minimization. Participants were clearly told about the aim of the study, and they were free to withdraw their participation at any given time, and informed about the ways in which their identities would be protected (Naz et al., 2022). Given that most of the displaced women are victims of trauma, we engaged camp authorities and local NGOs to provide counseling to the participants who found the interview traumatic. To ensure anonymity, only pseudonyms were used in all the transcripts and reports, and any participants' details were removed from the data. The study adhered to the "do no harm" principle; thus, we avoided any form of stress or discomfort among the participants during the interviews and FDGs. All gathered data were kept confidential, and the information was accessible only to us in order to protect participants' identity.

As valuable as the findings of this research are in the context of understanding the resilience processes among displaced women, it is possible to identify some limitations of this work. This concentration on the IDP camps in Northern Nigeria may limit the generalization of the results to other displacement contexts, particularly where cultural, political or economic factors differ significantly from those observed in the study areas. Moreover, like in all qualitative studies, the results are contextual and based on the self-perceptions of the participants of the study. This allows for a wider understanding; however, it also means that the findings of the study are not generalizable to all displaced women in different contexts. The dangers of using interviews and focus groups is that it produces self-reported data that may be skewed by social desirability bias or by the participants' willingness to discuss issues such as gender-based violence. Nevertheless, the use of the qualitative method and an exploration of context in this study is a valuable contribution to the exploration of resilience and gender aspects in displacement. This study therefore aims at understanding displaced women's views and interpretations of gender, displacement, and resilience, and how these factors shape displaced women's coping in conflict-affected locations.

Results

The results of this study show how gender and displacement interact with each other, and how best women in the IDP camps are able to cope with their challenges. The results are organized into the following four key themes: (1) gender based violence and protection, (2) economic resilience strategies, (3) social support and solidarity, and (4) change in gender dynamics due to displacement. These themes capture the ways in which women in IDP camps live in, negotiate for, and sometimes rethink gender within their contexts. Figure 1 shows the thematic map portraying the major resilience activities of displaced women in IDP camps as informed by economic income-generating activities, social support and networks, physical integrity/violence, and changing roles.

Thematic Map of Resilience Strategies

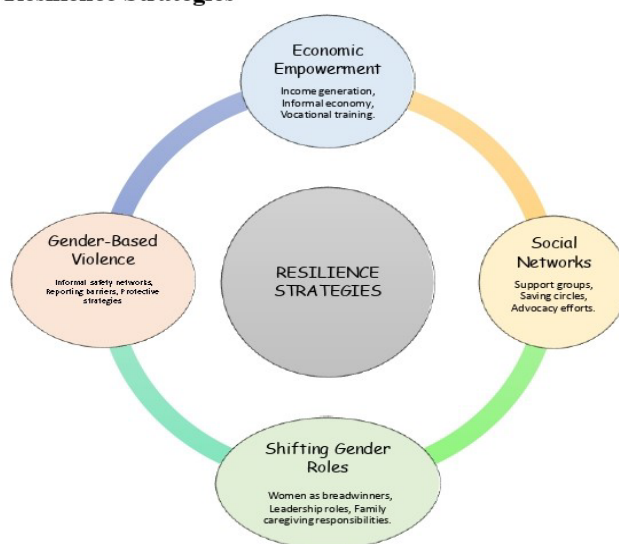


Figure 1: Thematic Map of Resilience Strategies

Source: Self-generated by the Author

Gender-Based Violence and Protection Mechanisms

This interviews and FGDs led to the identification of GBV as a major issue in the camps. All but one of the participants acknowledged either having faced or knowing someone who has faced physical or sexual violence from the other displaced persons, camp officials, or security forces. The women said they always felt at risk, especially due to a perceived weakness in security and inaction from the authorities. The following is an example: “We are not safe here. Still within the camp, there are men who exploit us; we therefore have to be careful” (Participant 12, 34 years old).

This sense of insecurity is elevated by the fact that most of the women never report cases of violence for fear of being retaliated against, stigmatized, or have their complaints disbelieved (Capasso et al., 2022; Akik et al., 2020). But, the study also demonstrates how women are active in constructing their agency to avoid and shield themselves and other women from violence. Several participants pointed out the formation of small protection groups among the women to

protect one another especially at night, since that would be the most dangerous time for rape. These groups offered a feeling of togetherness and assisted women to deal with the continual risk of violence. In addition, some women have come out asking for more structured protection measures; for example, increased security check points and provision of special zones for women and girls in the camps. But, their bids have not always been successful (Ahmed et al., 2024).

Economic Empowerment as a Resilience Strategy

Among the themes of women's resilience, there was the economic domain. Although the displaced women have suffered losses in terms of income, they have adopted informal employment strategies including trading in small wares, making of artefacts; and serving as house helps. These activities give women that little measure of economic self-sufficiency and enable them to contribute partly to the sustenance in the household. Some of the participants pointed out that for these economic activities to work, it should not merely serve the needs of these participants, but also be centers of pride and meaning. These are instances of the belief: "We have been displaced but we still try to fend for ourselves." The moving, risk-taking decision making are also reflected in the participant's self-assertive statement: 'We do not just wait for help; we help ourselves' (Participant 7, 41 years old).

The preceding perspective is from where the idea of resilience comes, as it demonstrates the women's agency in response to their conditions and to their lives (Adhikari, 2020). Nonetheless, the economic opportunities for women in the camps are constrained by structural impediments such as restricted mobility, limited access to capital, and unequal access to aid. Some of the participants said that they noticed that men were favored in cash-for-work activities and other livelihood development projects. Women, however, do not stay idle and look for a way to engage in the informal economy secretly and use their social relations to share equipment and opportunities (Borges, 2024).

Social Networks and Collective Action

The significance of social networks for strengthening resistance was another finding of this study. Another major source is that the women in the camps depend on traditional coping mechanisms whereby they find solace in a region and without necessarily having to depend on government aid; they get food, shelter, company, and any other necessities from the other women in the camps. These networks may arise in forms of women organizations or a group of women who come together in a saving and sharing club where they save money to support one another during emergencies. This quote highlights the phenomenon: "We support one another with anything we can. Sometimes, just talking and that is so therapeutic when you feel you are all on your own" (Participant 20, 29 years old).

These networks are not simply used by women to meet their needs but also to mobilize, as women join forces in order to work on similar issues, including, for example, poor service provision or safety (Khan & White, 2023). In several camps, women's groups have taken an active stand insisting for improved living standards and protection against GBV. They have held sit-down strikes with camp authorities, international NGOs and local authorities to press for better security, health facilities, and education for their children. As with many such initiatives, these have had mixed effectiveness but have nonetheless provided a voice for women and raised their profiles within these contexts (Pak et al., 2023). The formation of these networks underlines

such principle of community resilience where people are assisted to come together so that they can support one another and equally be capable of leading their own communities.

Impact of Displacement on Gender Roles and Decision-Making Power

The last theme that came out of the data analysis was on displacement and its influence on gender roles and women's autonomy. A shift of roles among women in families has been realized since most of the women who were once relieved of certain duties by the men are now weighed down by responsibilities such as the loss of their husbands or fathers, sons or brothers, some of whom went to fight in the war. Some of them said they now provide for the families' needs, a role that was culturally expected of the men. An example of this view point is the following quote: "Earlier, a man worked, but you have to be at a certain place at a given time: 'it's rather difficult, but that's all I can do" (Participant 3, 38 years old).

This new reality has empowered some women to become the key decision makers in their homes as they are now in charge of handling resources and directing their children's learning and health care as Boulaalam and El Hannach (2024) have discovered. This same trend has come at the same time as increased pressure on women who now have to act as breadwinners while still being expected to maintain traditional female roles of childbearing. A number of interviews included the theme of fatigue resulting from the pressure exerted on women to fend for the family as well as being mothers and caretakers. This twofold burden draws attention to the fact that there is no simple occupation of gender roles within displacement, as women may take up more responsibilities and, hence, work more than men, but, this does not make them more equal. Nonetheless, most women have embraced these changes as a chance to be empowered and to change the traditional status quo wherein male family members dominate especially where they are absent.

Discussion

The part of this study provides important information regarding the gendered approach to resilience among the displaced women in IDP camps in Northern Nigeria. Considering gender, violence, economic necessity and social connections, the findings of the study explain how women experience and manage multiple aspects of forced migration. This discussion situates these findings within the existing debate, touching on issues of gender relations, resilience and power in displacement contexts. Furthermore, it assesses the extent to which the findings affirm or contradict the existing literature regarding the resilience of displaced women and provides methodological and conceptual reflections on the implications of these insights in the study of gender and resilience among conflict-affected populations.

Gender-Based Violence: Structural and Individual Responses

This paper has demonstrated that GBV is rampant among the IDPs and, as such, the role that structural factors play in constructing the experiences of displaced women cannot be overemphasized. It is equally axiomatic that GBV in conflict affected areas especially the northern part of Nigeria is not strange and women are more vulnerable to physical and sexual violence (Ajayi, 2020). The current paper makes an addition to the body of knowledge by showing how women suffer from GBV while also fighting it within the camp environment.

Informal protection groups wherein women get together in order to protect one another from possible violence represents a key element of the community having resilience that rises beyond personal ways to cope with stress (Capasso et al., 2022).

It is even more worrisome to observe the extent to which women's collective action is forced by circumstances than influenced by institutional structure. This means that informal networks are used to provide protection for displaced women, and this shows a major shortcoming in the formulation of security and legal protection for displaced women. On the one hand, this finding is in accord with Akik et al. (2020) who pointed out that despite the crises facing women, the formal institutions within conflict-affected regions are not well equipped to protect them. On the other hand, the women's collective protection mechanisms imply that even though institutional accommodation as a protective strategy is absent, women are capable of protecting themselves by forming protective networks. The ideas of feminists who encourage humanitarian aid for refugees and displaced persons, pointing to the need for gender perspective for women, are relevant here. As stated by Bell et al. (2020), historical models of humanitarianism have failed to address gendered aspects of displacement and women's risk factors as the periphery to displacement. This study has echoed the argument that has been made in other studies that there is a need to adopt a stronger approach to tackling GBV in IDP camps, where efforts to protect women are complemented by efforts toward changing the structural factors that compel women into accepting the vice.

Economic Empowerment and Gendered Agency

The study reveals how the concept of economic capital is most significant in enhancing the capacity of displaced women. Still, the position of women in IDP camps restricts their chances of getting a formal job or earning a living through legal business ventures, but a lot of them participate in different types of gainful activities in the informal economy. Not only does this economic activity give them economic power of the sort that is independent from men but also an opportunity to transgress gender norms in a way (Adhikari, 2020). The fact that women are now providing most of the income for their households in many aspects challenges the traditional role of men as the breadwinners in most conservative societies.

Nevertheless, the study also shows that the economic empowerment is not sufficient to shift gender power relations as desired. As the women are shouldering more responsibilities in terms of economic status, they are empowered to make decisions at the home front, but the changes have not had an impact on gender justice. There are still many women who combine paid work with care work, proving that patriarchal norms of women's roles as career employees and housekeepers have not changed (Shallangwa, 2021). This finding supports the view of Boulaalam and El Hannach (2024) that economic empowerment is not enough to transform long-established gender roles, especially where women are subordinate to men. Instead, economic enforcement has to proceed in conjunction with social and structural transformation that brings about change as regards women's rights. In addition, it's worrisome that the women rely heavily on informal economies as a coping mechanism, albeit one that is not very sustainable. Although the informal employment makes up the economic activity of women by offering them immediate sources of income, these are vulnerable and offer no legal rights and privileges as those offered by formal sector employment. This finding corresponds with the finding of Adhikari (2020) who pointed out that although informal economies may offer some relief in the short-term, they are unable to offer the protection women require in the long-term in order to bring about change.

Thus, an increased intensity of efforts is required to offer the displaced women decent work opportunities, vocational training, and capital so that they can graduate from mere subsistence to sustainable income generation.

Social Networks and Collective Action: Fostering Resilience

Another significant finding of this research is that the knowledge of the part played by social networks and collective action toward enhancing the resilience of displaced women. Female-headed households' dependence on family and friends, and women's groups and savings cooperatives are an indication of community-level mechanisms that ought to be enhanced. These networks offer not only the material aid but also offer emotional and psychological support through which the women are assisted to cope with trauma of displacement besides promoting women's togetherness (Khan & White, 2023). In line with this study, Abdi et al. (2023) stress that social support structures mediate the perception of favorable psychological change among displaced populations.

It is important to note that these networks support collective action according to the results of this study. The women in the camps are not only beneficiaries of relief assistance but also demand makers who protest for improvement in the camps' standards, services, and safety against GBV. All these collective endeavors indicate that displaced women are not just sufferers but also actors of change in their respective societies. This view accords with Borges (2024) who posited that displaced women are not just resilient to bring about change for themselves, but for the entire society. This element also refers to the interaction between resilience and power that is considered in the context of the studied community and its collective work. In this way, women are even able collectively to speak for the group and to claim more power over the running of the camps as well as the international relief organizations. While all of this speaks of collective empowering of the people, it is not without its problems. As Pak et al. (2023) states, when women get displaced and try to come together and fight for their rights, they face a lot of resistance from men in the community as well as camp leaders as a result of the threat to the patriarchal systems. Nonetheless, based on the evidence generated by the present research, collective action still holds great potential as a model to promote resilience and women's rights in the contexts of displacement.

Shifting Gender Roles and Decision-making Power

Displacement, changing roles and decisions concerning gender comprise another major area that has been identified in the study, which shows that displacement has altered gender dynamics in many homes with women taking up all the roles that were once performed by the men of the families. This transformation has led to improvements in some of the women's decision-making roles in their homes, which is a deviation from the typical social norms that tend to reduce women's decision-making capacities (Shallangwa, 2021). Nevertheless, the study also points out that these changes are not simple because women's new responsibilities do not mean that they are not burdened with care giving responsibilities.

The aforementioned finding is in agreement with what other scholars have noted regarding the "limits of resilience," especially as it pertains to women, as the culture of resilience is a useful way of framing some of the actions that women take in the world. Nonetheless, it may also help to disguise the fact that women are expected to bear extra obligations in critical

moments. As Bell et al. (2020) note, the ability for women to be resilient is celebrated while ignoring the very systems that made that ability necessary in the first place. Contrastingly, the present research underscores how women's resilience helps them cope with displacement challenges, while it also reaffirms gender stereotypes by positioning women as caregivers and breadwinners. The study also revealed the possibility of displacement to act as a force of change in terms of gender transformation. Some of the women have been opportune to transition freely and display their powers and independence as a man does. Nonetheless, as was mentioned before, such changes apply mostly at the household level and are not always indicative of changes in the whole society. This discovery indicates that although displacement results in new freedoms that enable gender transformation, these freedoms must be backed by structural reforms that can change gender relations.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

This study has been able to establish gender in IDP women's resilience processes in Northern Nigeria and filled a research gap in the study of IDP women in Nigeria by discussing the relationships between gender, violence and economic and social capital. First, from the perspective of Feminist Theory, Intersectionality Theory, and Resilience Theory, the study uncovers how gender relations of power are reconfigured through displacement and how women navigate adversity in the process. The study reveals this by showing that displaced women are not completely helpless, but are actors who actively participate in the process of trying to make the best out of the unfavorable conditions of displacement and in ways that distort patriarchal gender relations.

Second, a valuable finding of the study is that despite the proclaimed protection policies, GBV continues to be rampant within the camps and the formal protective structures are clearly inadequate. Thus, both legal and political frameworks have not effectively responded to the protection rights of displaced women, whereby social networks and community action are prominent sources of strength. Women's protective groups and advocacy entrenches the argument that women's security concerns can be effective when women come together to form protective structures that would enhance their security despite the existing humanitarian structures that lack proper consideration to the gendered experiences of displacement. The other strategy that was pursued to build the resilience of displaced women was economic empowerment that was also tapped.. Nonetheless, women in the region are not fully excluded from earning an income in the formal sector since they engage in informal economic activities to earn income, break the barriers of gender stereotype, and attain financial stability. But, two roles of economic and care-giving exposes the continued gender disparities despite the fact that women are assuming bread-winner roles.

Third, the paper also stresses the need for social networks in building up the resilience of individuals and communities. Female refugees in camps therefore rely on informal sources of support to cope with the problems of displacement and such support structures are organizational structures in disguise. Such findings point to the need for engaging community-level resilience approaches in conflict contexts since state institutions may be dysfunctional or insufficient.

Fourth, the research finds that displacement may bring changes to gender roles and decision-making authority. Although most women have improved their status within households and enjoying more freedom to make decisions on their own behalf, these transformations have not affected the overall culture. Despite the progressive gender attitudes reported, the

continuation of traditional gender roles along with the multiple roles women are expected to undertake implies that displacement requires structural transformations for gender equity.

Therefore, the resilience of displaced women in IDP camps in Northern Nigeria is a complex process which is social-statistical. This paper offers a contribution to the existing scholarship on gender and displacement to understand how women in conflict-induced displaced situations manage gendered power dynamics, the imperative of economic and social connections. The study's implications are in encouraging the development and implementation of gender-sensitive policies and programs in relation to the displaced women and to foster gender-sensitive programs that will help them overcome the aforementioned challenges and empower them to establish sustainable change for themselves and other women.

Fifth and finally, despite the rich knowledge generated about the gender relations and coping mechanisms of displaced women in Northern Nigerian IDP camps, this research recognizes certain limitations that may have affected the study and analysis. To commence with, Borno State is selected as the center of the study due to the severe impact of Boko Haram, which limits the generalizability of findings to other areas or refugee settings. It means that such results obtained may not be fully applicable to different social, cultural and political settings and therefore the experiences of women who are displaced in urban areas or in international refugee camps may be different. Next, the use of self-generated data from interviews and FDGs brings out reporting bias particularly on the topics of GBV and financial difficulties in which participants may underreport due to shame or threat of repercussions.

Also, the study conducted only affords a one-time/single time-point view of the situations faced by the women and, thus, cannot explain any dynamic shift in gender relations and/or resilience strategies over time. Small-scale surveys would be required to capture these at different points in time and, therefore, longitudinal research would be needed to capture these changes fully and offer a more profound assessment of displacement impacts. One of them is the absence of male participants in the research process, which inevitably limits our discussion and potential to address the general question of how displacement reshapes gender relations. Finally, the study addresses mental health issues but does not probe substantial analysis of mental health consequences of displacement, assessment of mental health services. Therefore, future research should consider this issue as a relevant direction. Despite its limitations, the study helps to fill the existing gap in the literature by providing insights about resilience strategies among displaced women.

Accordingly, based on the findings of this study, we make several policy recommendations to enhance the resilience of displaced women and address the gendered dimensions of displacement in the IDP camps. The recommendations are presented one by one in the ensuing paragraphs for the sake of lucidity.

For starters, humanitarian agencies/relief organizations and governments should endeavor to develop structures that protect displaced women from GBV. This includes ramping up security surveillance, providing safe havens in the camps, and ensuring that the systems for reporting GBV cases are informed and sought by the target beneficiaries.

Next, there are areas that require more intervention to enable displaced women access to employment, vocational training and finance. Efforts that aim at encouraging working women to return to the paid economy will go a long way in freeing more women from the vulnerability and insecurity associated with the informal economy.

Also, this research found that women's groups and informal networks are important in enhancing resilience and supporting the rights of displaced women. These networks should be

supported by humanitarian agencies by offering them resources and the capacity to train and establish opportunities that will help women come out and participate in the camp leadership and decision making. The Two-Thirds Gender and the Struggle for Economic and Caring Work Responsibilities Policies and programs should appreciate the fact that displaced women are both the bread-winners and caretakers of households. Steps should be taken to offer childcare and other services that will help to ease the burden on women and allow them to engage in more economic and social activities.

In addition, system transformations are required for struggles against gender stereotypes regarding women's rights to make decisions and for the reinforcement of patriarchal models. This must entail a sustainable agenda for women and girls in conflict and post-displacement contexts for ensuring social transformation by disapproving those vices toward the females through enhanced education and campaigns on appropriate societal behavior. These recommendations are intended to target the structural vulnerability factors eroding displaced women's resilience and to acknowledge and bolster the coping mechanisms used by women in adversity.

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