

Unmasking the human rights needs of internally displaced persons: a case study of selected states in Nigeria

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The authors of this paper are indebted to the reviewers for their positive comments.

To every internally displaced person, you are always in our thoughts and prayers.

Conflict of interest statement:
None declared.

Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of internally displaced persons regarding their experiences with various human rights prescripts. This study also sought to contribute to the literature on the living conditions of internally displaced persons and narrow the gap in internal displacement studies, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.*

Design/methodology/approach – *A case study approach and quantitative research paradigm were adopted in the study. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 584 participants in Niger State, Edo State and Kaduna State in Nigeria.*

Findings – *The findings reveal that most of the internally displaced persons were youth, unemployed and had a strong motivation to meet their physiological needs. The empirical evidence in this study leads to the conclusion that the daily struggle of the participants to meet their survival needs overshadows every other human rights consideration among them.*

Research limitations/implications – *Various practical and theoretical implications are inferred from this study including the imperative to urgently address the causes of internal displacement and provide urgent assistance to internally displaced persons.*

Originality/value – *Besides the novel conceptual insights and empirical data, this study makes unique contributions to literature on internally displaced persons and human rights theory.*

Keywords *Human rights, Human rights theory, Internally displaced persons, Maslow's theory of needs, Nigeria*

Paper type *Research paper*

1. Introduction

Studies on the living conditions of internally displaced persons (IDPs) have focused predominantly on the health challenges prevalent in communities where IDPs seek refuge (Cantor and Woolley, 2020; Niyi-Gafar and Adelakun, 2022). Hendrickx *et al.* (2020) lament the fact that research on the welfare of IDPs is minimal compared to their counterparts who migrate across international borders, for example, as refugees and through other forms of international migration. Another notable gap in research on IDP communities relates to the paucity of IDP research in the global South compared to research conducted in the more economically affluent countries in the global north (Morinar *et al.*, 2018). Despite the large number of internally displaced persons living within local communities, institutions, such as the World Bank (2017), have criticised studies which focus on IDPs living in camps, thereby failing to unmask the situation of more vulnerable groups. This study contributes to research on IDPs by exploring the perceptions of internally displaced persons in three Nigerian states (Niger, Kaduna and Edo) regarding their experiences with respect to human rights.

IDPs are defined in the United Nations' Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (UN-GPID) as, "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to

leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violation of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border" (UN, 2004: 1). The distinction between IDPs and Refugees is important for a number of reasons, notably because, as Cantor *et al.* (2021) point out, IDPs often live close to the places of their displacement, rendering them more vulnerable to the conditions that prompted them to flee from their homes. Moreover, differentiating IDPs from Refugees is critical as it serves to define and attribute responsibility for their welfare. While state governments bear the primary responsibility for the protection of IDPs, Refugees remain the responsibility of humanitarian organisations (Adeola, 2019). Nonetheless, both IDPs and Refugees remain under the ambit and protection of international human rights law, whose prescripts guard against actions that could infringe on their basic freedoms, entitlements and dignity [United Nations Refugee Agency, 2006]. Despite the comprehensive nature of human rights legislation, Daif *et al.* (2023) argue that internally displaced persons are still among some of the world's most susceptible to human rights abuses, firstly because they are often on the move making tracking of any abuses difficult, and secondly because the multi-faceted causes of internal displacement increases the vulnerability of affected persons to multiple violations.

1.1 Contextualising the internally displaced person situation in Nigeria

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) puts the number of internally displaced people in the world at 59.1 million [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 2022]. Even more disturbing is the fact that the global report on internal displacement reveals that more than half of internal displacement (38 million) only occurred in 2021, with 14.4 million (38%) of forced migrations prompted by conflicts and violence and 23.7 million (62%) triggered by disasters [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 2022]. These figures present a bleak picture considering the unpredictable conditions faced by IDPs who are often forced out of their livelihoods and futile global efforts are made to curb the scourge of internal displacement. The UNHCR asserts that the number of people who flee from their homes in search of refuge within the borders of their country is significantly higher than those who cross national borders as refugees or asylum seekers [United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), 2021]. From a regional perspective, sub-Saharan Africa was among the worst affected by internal displacements in 2021, with 11,558, 000 people forcibly displaced by conflicts and violence and 2, 554, 000 triggered by disasters [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 2022]. This number accounts for 37.1% of all IDPs in 2021, making sub-Saharan Africa second only to East Asia and Pacific (37.6%) in the world [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 2022].

In the context of Nigeria, the recorded number of IDPs stood at 2.7 million in 2020 (Statista, 2022). However, this number increased by 400, 000 in 2021, with disasters accounting for the displacement of 24, 000 people and 376, 000 forcibly removed by violence and conflict [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 2022]. The Boko Haram insurgency is estimated to account for the forced displacement of 3.9 million people in Nigeria within the last decade, with 2.1 million of these living as IDPs [International Organisation for Migration (IOM), 2021; United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), 2021]. Most victims of this armed conflict have been residents of States in the northern part of Nigeria such as Borno, Yobe and Adamawa (Dunn, 2018). Many survivors of these armed attacks and kidnappings tend to flee to relatively safer regions where they either live in camps or among community members [United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), 2021].

Crawford *et al.* (2015) observed that once displaced for more than six months, IDPs tend to live in displacement for longer periods of more than three years. Following the same line of thought, Mubarak *et al.* (2016) and Siriwardhana *et al.* (2015) assert that the trauma experienced by IDPs as a result of the forced displacement from their homes, loss of their

livelihoods and separation from their families often results in increased incidents of diseases, food insecurity and mental health challenges. These challenges are often exacerbated by the prolonged stay away from their home environment (Roberts *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, Ekezie (2022) argues that recent efforts to assist IDPs have shifted from settling them in camps to providing them with opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. However, Adesina *et al.* (2020) raises an important concern regarding the large number of IDPs who do not migrate to camps but rather settle among local residents and thus pose unique challenges in being identified. Despite the increasing research interest in the plight of IDPs, Blanchet *et al.* (2017) and Rass *et al.* (2020) lament the paucity of studies exploring the views of IDPs. This study therefore aims to contribute to closing these research gaps by exploring the perceptions of IDPs living among local residents in the states of Niger, Kaduna and Edo regarding their experience of various human rights provisions. The following questions are central to this study:

- Q1. Who are the IDPs in Niger, Kaduna and Edo states?
- Q2. What are the experiences of the IDPs with regards to their basic human rights?
- Q3. What are the key motivations/aspirations among the IDPs?
- Q4. How can the human rights needs of the IDPs be addressed?

2. Conceptual framework

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GPID) provide a framework for understanding and ensuring the respect of human rights among internally displaced persons (UN, 2004). While acknowledging the herculean challenges involved in protecting the human rights of people forcibly dislodged from their places of permanent residence due to violent conflicts, excessive abuse of their human rights, man-made or natural disasters, among others, the GPID outline the inalienable rights that should be upheld when interacting with IDPs. Special attention is accorded to the situations IDPs face because most, if not all, IDPs endure traumatic situations characterised by deprivation, injustice and other forms of hardship. Therefore, it is incumbent on local authorities and other international humanitarian agencies to ensure that their human rights are respected in the communities where they seek refuge. For the purpose of this study, key provisions of the human rights of IDPs, as captured in the GPID, are summarised in Figure 1 below.

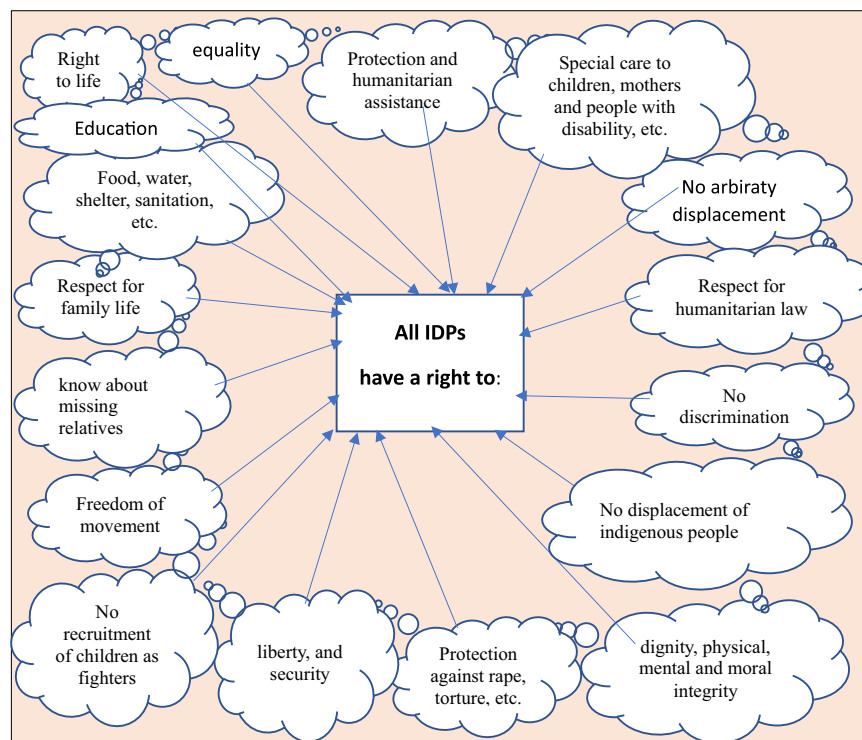
An important feature reflected in Figure 1 is the interconnectedness of the different human rights prescripts. This explains why each human rights ordinance is connected to all the others. In other words, the ideal is to ensure that the human rights of IDPs are protected on all fronts considering that failure to uphold any one of the human rights regulations can be described as not protecting the human rights of the people concerned (Amnesty International, 2022). The illustrated human rights framework (Figure 1) is important in this study as it serves as a benchmark for assessing the perceptions of IDPs regarding their human rights experiences.

3. Theoretical underpinning of the study

It is also important to provide a theoretical underpinning to this study to give more depth and general context to the experiences of IDPs in the communities under study. In this regard, the evolution of the theory of human rights will be examined to highlight the important place it occupies in communities and Maslow's theory of needs (Maslow, 1943) will give context to the needs and aspirations of the IDPs.

The theory of human rights has its roots in the critical writings of John Locke (1689) who dwelt on the innate and inalienable rights of all human beings by virtue of the fact that they are human. Locke (1689) referred to these as "natural rights" because they reflect the fact that

Figure 1 Human rights framework for internally displaced persons



Source: Author's own work

human beings are rational creatures capable of thinking for themselves and pursuing happiness within the limits of natural laws (Frankle, 1974). However, Locke (1689) argued that even though rational individuals will cede some of their rights to political authorities who will in turn be responsible for protecting the individual natural rights, he insisted that individuals should always retain their natural rights to life, liberty and property (Heyman, 2018).

In Myer's (2017) view, the concept of human rights has changed significantly over the few decades since the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948), where 30 articles with multiple accompanying proclaimed rights were endorsed by members of the global body. In the same vein, human rights theory has experienced persistent mutations to the extent that by 2013 various United Nations' agencies had promulgated 667 legal provisions distributed across 27 human rights instruments (Myers, 2017). A focus on human rights literature reveals three notable conceptual transitions in human rights theory from natural rights (Locke, 1689), to human rights (UN, 1948) and to human rights as the fulfilment of human needs (UN, 2004). This adaptive nature of human rights theory explains the appropriateness of using the GPID as the main document of reference in this study as it addresses the human rights needs of IDPs.

Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation, commonly referred to as the hierarchy of needs, has been widely used to explain human behaviour and motivation (Benson and Dundis, 2003; Heslop, 2006; Ștefan, Popa, and Albu, 2020). It has been used to explain the relationship between variables in studies in the fields of education (Chew, Jones and Turner, 2008), healthcare (Zhang *et al.*, 2022), consumer studies (Yuen *et al.*, 2021) and community development (Aruma and Hanachor, 2017). In his theory of human motivation, Maslow (1943) proposed five levels of human needs which are organised in hierarchical order:

- physiological needs;
- safety needs;
- belonging and love;
- esteem; and
- self-actualisation.

Generally presented in the form of a pyramid, [Maslow \(1943\)](#) propounded that human beings are motivated to pursue these needs in hierarchical order from physiological needs at the bottom and progress towards the top (self-actualisation). Physiological needs include things such as food, water, rest and other biological requirements for life sustenance while safety needs have to do with security and safety. Belonging and love needs are addressed by intimate relationships and friendships, esteem needs by the feeling of accomplishment and prestige and self-actualisation by the attainment of one's full potential. While Maslow's theory of needs has been widely cited and appreciated, it has nonetheless received some criticism, not least because of the inherent assumption that people have to satisfy one set of needs before moving up the ladder to the next level of needs ([Majercsik, 2005](#)).

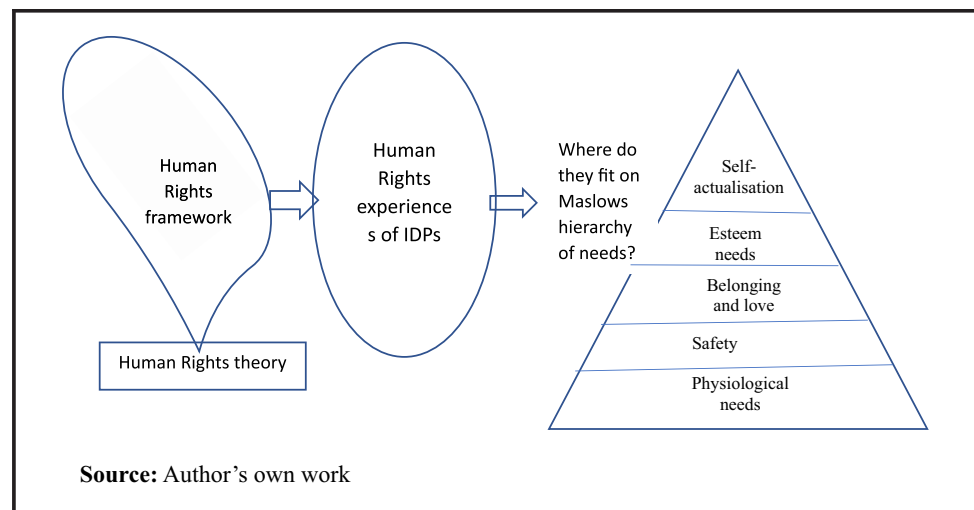
In the context of this study, Maslow's theory of needs serves as an instrument against which the motivations of the IDPs can be measured. Put differently, Maslow's theory is important to answer the third research question regarding the major aspirations of the IDPs. Therefore, the conceptual framework guiding this study ([Figure 2](#)) is made up of the human rights framework presented in [Figure 1](#), the theory of human rights and Maslow's theory of needs discussed above.

The conceptual framework presented in [Figure 2](#) illustrates that human rights precepts that make up the human rights framework are rooted in human rights theory. Similarly, human rights ordinances constitute the key instrument for assessing the human rights experiences of IDPs in the identified communities. The results of the assessment of the human rights experiences of the IDPs will reveal the motivations and aspirations of the IDPs which can be interpreted using the different levels of Maslow's theory of needs.

4. Case study research design

[Yin \(2018\)](#) describes case study research design as the investigation of a current phenomenon using empirical evidence. From this perspective, the case study approach

Figure 2 Conceptual framework guiding the study



offers a number of advantages, notably the study of a situation as it unfolds in a real world context. [Bertrand and Hughes \(2017\)](#) postulate that another benefit of case study research is that it offers the researcher an opportunity to examine a single incident from multiple sources such as collecting data from informants while observing occurrences. A similar view is shared by [Veal \(2011\)](#) who alludes to the pragmatism that case studies bring to research due to the additional perspective of the researcher's first-hand recollection of events in the field. The motivation for adopting the case study approach in this study is the seriousness of the subject of human rights, hence the researcher deemed it appropriate to elevate the human rights plight faced by IDPs through the platform of academic discourse and engagement.

4.1 Background to internal displacement in Nigeria

The main causes of internal displacement in Nigeria can be summarised into three broad categories; namely armed insurgency, natural disasters and ethnoreligious conflicts ([Ekezie, 2022](#); [Mohammed, 2017](#)). Of these crises, the decade old Boko Haram insurgency has displaced more than two million people and caused untold misery through the loss of family members, torture, sexual assault, injuries and disability to millions more ([IOM, 2022](#)), especially in the northern part of the country. Further south, the major source of conflict has been petroleum exploration, commonly referred to as black gold ([Adesina *et al.*, 2020](#)). The dire situation in this area has been fueled by environmental degradation caused by oil spillages ([Albert, Amarantunga and Haigh, 2018](#); [Osugwu and Olaifa, 2018](#)) and socio-economic tensions born out of high unemployment, poverty and high levels of criminality ([Ibaba, 2008](#)). Further to the insurgencies, natural disasters, especially floods have also destroyed many homes and community livelihoods thereby forcing many people to flee to other states for safety ([Akpoghome, 2015](#); [Dirikgil, 2022](#)). In 2021, Nigeria experienced the forced displacement of 24,000 people due to natural disasters [[Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre \(IDMC\), 2022](#)].

The number of IDPs in Nigeria has also been exacerbated by ethno-religious disputes which often turn violent and dislodge many people from their places of permanent residence ([Ishaku *et al.*, 2020](#)). Nigeria's population of 218, 899, 827 inhabitants ([Worldometer, 2023](#)) is made up of about 250 ethnic communities speaking more than 400 languages, holding different religious beliefs and having various cultural practices ([Egwu, 2004](#)). [Ali and Yahaya \(2019\)](#) attribute the persistent ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria to the multicultural nature of the society which has given rise to suspicions, distrust and antagonism among different communities. The northern part of Nigeria is plagued by momentary ethnic clashes, particularly between the nomadic herdsman and the indigenes agro-pastoral communities ([Adesina and Kanmodi, 2019](#)).

The geopolitical situation of Kaduna, Niger and Edo states, where the field work for this study was conducted, renders them relatively peaceful and attractive to IDPs as they are more centrally located (see [Figure 3](#)) and away from the main battle grounds. Once out of the conflict zones, many IDPs settle in structured environments, such as camps, where there is easy access to humanitarian assistance ([Olanrewaju *et al.*, 2019](#)), while majority of them settle among host community members making it difficult to be identified ([Ekezie, 2022](#)). Participants in this study were IDPs who had blended into the community and had largely been ignored by previous studies ([Ibrahim, 2019](#); [Obiefuna and Adams, 2021](#)).

5. Methods

The following sections explain the processes that were followed to arrive at answers to the questions posed in this study. Specific details regarding the research design, development of the research instrument, population and sampling, ethical considerations, data collection and data analysis are provided below.

Figure 3 Map of Nigeria showing data collection sites of Kaduna, Niger and Edo states



5.1 Research design

This study followed a quantitative research approach in gathering information from as many IDPs as possible. A cross-sectional research design was adopted as data was collected from IDPs in three states close to the crises hot spots in Nigeria ([Adesina et al., 2020](#); [Ekezie, 2022](#)). Hence, Kaduna State and Niger state, towards the north where the Boko Haram insurgency has rained havoc for more than 10 years, were purposively selected. Edo State, towards the South, where environmental and economic concerns associated with oil exploration have led to unabated criminality ([Albert et al., 2018](#)) was chosen as the data collection site.

5.2 Research instrument

In line with the quantitative design adopted in this study, a questionnaire was developed to serve as the data collection instrument. This survey instrument was divided into three sections. Section A focused on gathering demographic information to answer the first research question on the defining characteristics of the IDPs. Section B explored perceptions of the respondents on the extent to which various aspects of their human rights are met. Section C gathered data on the IDPs motivations and aspirations towards the future. Questions on the human rights section of the questionnaire were informed by human rights documents such as the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights ([UN, 1948](#)), Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation [[United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights \(UNHCHR\), 2021](#)] and the United Nations g GPID ([UN, 2004](#)).

5.3 Pilot study

The research instrument had to be tested for validity, reliability and clarity. In this regard, 20 IDPs in Durban, South Africa were invited to complete the questionnaire. Results of the pilot study revealed a few ambiguities in some of the questions which were immediately addressed. For example, the question on the availability of space for privacy was misinterpreted by a few

respondents to mean ownership of land for economic activities. After this, the questionnaire was finalised, formatted and printed.

5.4 Ethical considerations

Considering the sensitivity associated with human rights issues, applications for ethical clearance were submitted simultaneously in Edo State University in Nigeria where the data was going to be collected and at Walter Sisulu University (WSU) in South Africa. An ethical clearance certificate with reference number FAMASS/DO/ETC/121/VOL.1 / 1 was obtained from Edo State University on the 21st of March 2022 and the second ethical clearance certificate, with reference 2022/STAFF/THS/1352, was received from WSU on the 26th of April 2022.

5.5 Data collection

Data for this study was simultaneously collected from Kaduna, Niger and Edo states from 15th of July to the 30th of October 2022. Prior to the data collection, field workers were selected and trained to ensure the respect of ethical conduct, understanding of questions in the instrument and familiarity with the research sites or communities. Two lecturers with expertise in research (one from Edo State University and the other from Kwara State University) volunteered to work with the researcher during the training of field workers and the data collection exercise. The field workers were selected based on their previous exposure to research, ability to communicate in the local language and English and expert knowledge of the study site or communities in which the IDPs live. Training of the field workers took place between the 5th of July to the 10th of July 2022. Once in the field, the protocol to approach IDPs for data collection was streamlined as follows: the field worker initiates the conversation with the traditional greeting, asks questions aimed at ensuring that the potential respondent is an IDP, explains the purpose of the study and asks if they would be willing to take part in the study. IDPs who gave their consent to participate in the study were either handed the questionnaire to complete or had it read to them and their responses noted on the questionnaire.

5.6 Population and sampling

There are a few observations regarding the populations which are worth noting here. The first is that the population of IDPs in any community is relatively unstable because IDPs move in and out of the community as conditions improve either in their community of permanent residence or elsewhere. Secondly, even though IDPs live alongside community members, they are easily identifiable because community members usually offer them assistance to settle, especially in the case of families or people with children. Given this scenario, sampling the respondents in this study took the form of simple random convenience sampling and occasionally snowballing as some IDPs voluntarily pointed out other IDPs to the field worker. This pattern of sampling and collecting data from consenting IDPs was followed until the fieldworkers reached saturation point in each community they visited. At the end of the data collection exercise 258 participants completed the questionnaire satisfactorily in Kaduna State, 180 in Niger State and 146 in Edo State. The sample size validity was confirmed using [Krejcie and Morgan's \(1970\)](#) sample size table ([Table 1](#)).

5.7 Data analysis

The data were analysed using both descriptive and exploratory statistics. While the descriptive analysis focused on getting the general trends and characteristics from the data, exploratory analysis aimed at checking for any underlying patterns and associations.

Table 1 Table for determining sample size

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	346
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	354
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	191	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	170	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	180	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	190	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	200	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	370
65	56	210	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	220	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	230	144	550	226	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	240	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	250	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	260	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	254	2600	335	100000	384

Notes: N = population size; S = sample size

Source: Krejcie and Morgan (1970)

The data were initially captured on Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and analysed using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.

6. Results

6.1 Descriptive results

The descriptive results presented in [Table 2](#) reveal the profiles of the respondents who took part in this study.

It is evident from these findings that most of the IDPs (44%) were located in Kaduna State and were fleeing from violent conflict (56%) within the same state (33%) and Borno State (32%). There were more males (50.2%) and most of the respondents were young, between the ages of 18–25 years (33%), mostly unemployed (49.8%) and had barely completed primary school (22.1%).

Three open-ended questions placed at the end of the questionnaire were designed to delve into the respondents' situation to understand the most significant changes they looked forward to to meet their humanitarian needs. These questions were important because they revealed the aspirations or motivations of the IDP participants. The first question asked about one thing that the respondents considered would make a significant positive difference in their lives.

[Table 3](#) indicates that most of the respondents (32.4%) expressed that their greatest motivation was to acquire the basic necessities of life such as food, water and quality sleep. This was followed by the need for safety and security (23.6%). The next question asked about what they were most anxious about. The data shows that most of the participants (54.1%) were most anxious or concerned about insecurity than the lack of food and other subsistence needs. The final question was mainly for emphasis as the respondents were given the opportunity to mention any issue of importance to them that the questionnaire had not raised. From [Table 3](#), it is clear that most of the respondents (70%) perceived the questionnaire to have comprehensively covered their concerns while other participants (17.1%) thought that it was worthwhile to reiterate the need to meet their basic necessities such as food and shelter.

Table 2 Demographic characteristics of respondents

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Location of IDPs	Niger state	146	25
	Kaduna state	258	44
	Edo state	180	31
Origin of IDPs	Zamfara state	43	7
	Plateau state	16	3
	Kebbi state	12	2
	Sokoto state	19	3
	Niger state	56	10
	Kaduna state	191	33
	Borno state	188	32
	Adamawa state	53	10
Reasons for displacement	Flooding	79	14
	War	326	56
	Fire	19	3
	Kidnapping	53	9
	Banditry	93	16
	Herdsman and farmers' conflict	12	2
Gender	Male	293	50.2
	Female	291	49.8
Age	18–25	193	33
	26–35	134	22
	36–45	149	26
	46–55	80	14
	56–65	23	4
	65+	5	1
Employment status	Unemployed	291	49.8
	Self-employed	169	28.9
	Government employee	55	9.4
	Private sector employee	69	11.9
Education status	No formal education	108	18.5
	Primary school	129	22.1
	Pre-University	110	18.8
	University	44	7.5
	National diploma	70	12
	First degree	96	16.4
	Post graduate	27	4.7

Source: Author's own work, 2024

6.2 Exploratory factor analysis

The second phase of the data analysis was based on the IDPs assessment of their human rights situation using a five-point Likert scale to indicate whether they were: 1 = never, 2 = hardly, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often or 5 = always treated as mentioned. The 18 human rights items on the list were drawn mainly from the United Nations human rights indicators: a guide to measurement and implementation [United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), 2021].

The data sets from the three states (Kaduna, Niger and Edo) were put together for the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to explore any underlying patterns in the perceptions of the IDPs. The data were subjected to Principal Component Analysis (PCA) using SPSS version 27. The suitability of the data for factor analysis was first ascertained prior to the PCA and the factorability of the correlation matrix was confirmed by a strong Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) of 0.903, exceeding the recommended value of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1970). The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity also revealed statistical significance at 0.000.

Following the validation of the data, the PCA revealed three components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining a total of 58.29 and distributed as 39.746, 11.945 and 6.603 respectively. However, an examination of the scree plot indicated a significant break after

Table 3 Main aspirations of the respondents

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Perception</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
One thing that will make a significant positive change in your life	More security, safety	138	23.6
	Money	63	10.8
	Family (uniting with my family, relatives, children, father, mother, parents, etc)	40	6.8
	Education, schooling, for my children, my education, scholarship, etc.	62	10.6
	Freedom: Get outdoors, speech, movement, etc.	22	3.8
	Subsistence (food, water, electricity, home, sleep well, clothes, health care	189	32.4
What worries you the most	Employment	70	12
	Insecurity/rape/war	316	54.1
	Poverty: lack of food, water and shelter	118	20.2
	Separation from family, desire to be home and absence (longing for) of love	43	7.4
	Not being at school	46	7.9
	Freedom: go outdoors, move around, speak, etc.	8	1.4
Anything you want to add	Fear: being killed, my husband, family members lost	53	9.1
	Safety and security/stop rape/just want to be free	73	12.5
	Nothing more to add	409	70
	Re-unite with my family members	2	0.3
	Change living conditions: get a job, go to school, address health condition, provide food, water, shelter for my family	100	17.1

Source: Author's own work, 2024

the second component, motivating the retention of the two components with a cumulative value of 51.691. The 18 human rights elements loaded on the two components as presented in Table 4. Based on their similarities, the two underlying components are labelled as subsistence and safety.

Details from Table 4 further confirm that the critical needs of the IDPs are survival elements of life and safety and security.

6.3 Analysis of variance

Having ascertained from the descriptive and exploratory analysis what the critical human rights needs of the IDPs as a whole are, it was thought necessary to find out if there are

Table 4 Factor analysis for human rights needs of IDPs

<i>Human rights indicator</i>	<i>Underlying need/loading</i>	
	<i>Subsistence</i>	<i>Safety</i>
Health	0.863	
Free movement	0.821	
Communication	0.785	
Equality	0.769	
Accommodation	0.765	
Water	0.750	
Access education	0.730	
Religious practice	0.729	
Security	0.726	
Cultural practice	0.723	
Privacy	0.619	
Vote	0.496	
Food	0.481	
Security assistance	0.390	
Safety concerns		0.380
Treatment		0.832
Enslavement		0.823
Arrest		0.701

Source: Author's own work, 2024

statistically significant differences between key demographic variables such as age, gender and location or state. To obtain the ANOVA on age, the participants were divided into various age groups, with group 1 between 18 and 25 years, group 2, 26–35 years, group 3, 36–45 years, group 4, 46–55 years, group 5, 56–65 years and group 6, above 65 years. Results of the analysis of variance based on age group are presented in Table 5 below.

Results of the ANOVA on age (Table 5) reveal that there are statistically significant differences in the human rights perceptions of the respondents based on age as evident in the *p*-values which are less than or equal to 0.05 (Pallant, 2013: 262). These statistically significant differences relate to perceptions on equality, free communication, freedom of religious practice, among others. A close examination of the ANOVA results indicates differences between age groups 1 (18–25 years) and group 2 (26–35 years). To understand the significance of the differences, the effect sizes were calculated using the formula:

$$\text{Eta squared} = \frac{\text{Sum of squares between groups}}{\text{Total sum of squares}}$$

The results indicated minimal impact of the effect sizes as the values were below 0.06 (Cohen, 1988) while the rest demonstrated medium effect with values less than 0.14.

6.4 Analysis of variance based on gender

Further analysis of variance was conducted between male and female participants. The males were categorised as Group 1 and the females as Group 2. The results follow in Table 6.

Just as with the ANOVA on age groups, this ANOVA on gender revealed a number of statistically significant differences with *p*-values of less than or equal to 0.05 (Pallant, 2013). Even though the males and females had similar perceptions regarding equality, getting assistance with security, safety concerns, freedom of movement, getting food and having the opportunity to vote, data captured in Table 6 shows that there were statistically

Table 5 ANOVA Between age groups of IDPs

Human rights indicator	Age groups (in years)												p	t
	(18–25)		(26–35)		(36–45)		(46–55)		(56–65)		65+			
	N1 = 193		N2 = 134		N3 = 149		N4 = 80		N5 = 23		N6 = 5			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Equality	3.87	1.43	3.39	1.43	3.12	1.39	3.03	1.38	3.43	1.38	3.0	2.0	0.001	0.05
Security	3.14	1.52	3.01	1.44	2.80	1.53	2.80	1.41	2.61	1.41	2.40	1.95	0.18	0.01
Communication	4.38	1.14	3.92	1.34	3.34	1.56	3.29	1.55	3.83	1.30	2.60	1.52	0.001	0.12
Religious practice	4.47	1.07	3.97	1.35	3.60	1.54	3.65	1.50	3.65	1.67	3.40	0.89	0.001	0.07
Security assistance	2.48	1.35	2.66	1.29	2.58	1.25	2.70	1.34	2.65	0.98	1.60	0.89	0.38	0.009
Safety concerns	3.49	1.68	3.13	1.51	2.56	1.33	2.64	1.33	2.87	1.39	3.60	1.34	0.001	0.00
Free movement	4.15	1.23	3.45	1.36	3.06	1.45	3.23	1.41	3.74	1.25	2.60	1.67	0.001	0.10
Health	4.02	1.34	3.65	1.37	3.17	1.44	3.33	1.44	3.52	1.41	2.40	1.67	0.001	0.06
Arrest	2.19	1.66	2.03	1.42	1.93	1.28	1.65	1.14	1.78	1.24	2.80	2.05	0.062	0.02
Food	3.06	1.31	3.34	1.17	2.93	1.13	2.90	1.12	2.86	1.21	3.0	2.0	0.056	0.02
Water	3.88	1.21	3.48	1.34	2.94	1.38	3.18	1.49	3.30	1.49	2.60	1.67	0.001	0.07
Accommodation	3.97	1.18	3.51	1.31	3.02	1.35	3.34	1.39	3.52	1.28	2.20	1.30	0.001	0.08
Access education	4.10	1.28	3.65	1.44	3.30	1.43	3.46	1.43	3.48	1.38	3.20	1.30	0.001	0.05
Privacy	3.63	1.27	3.22	1.35	2.89	1.29	3.05	1.27	3.17	1.07	3.20	0.84	0.001	0.04
Treatment	2.54	1.62	2.37	1.41	2.63	1.36	2.17	1.23	2.30	0.97	2.80	2.05	0.231	0.01
Enslavement	2.31	1.64	2.20	1.46	2.47	1.36	2.0	1.33	2.48	1.41	2.60	1.82	0.275	0.01
Vote	4.17	1.32	3.97	1.40	3.97	1.37	3.91	1.49	3.87	1.14	3.80	1.10	0.622	0.006
Cultural practice	4.40	1.03	3.86	1.25	3.26	1.45	3.31	1.51	3.26	1.32	4.40	0.89	0.001	0.13
TOTAL	3.57	1.34	3.27	1.37	2.98		2.88		3.13		2.60			

Source: Author's own work, 2024

Table 6 ANOVA based on gender

Human rights indicator	Gender				p-value	t
	Male N1 = 293	SD	Female N2 = 291	SD		
Equality	3.33	1.44	3.52	1.46	0.11	0.004
Security	2.77	1.47	3.13	1.50	0.003	0.01
Communication	3.63	1.44	4.02	1.42	0.001	0.02
Religious practice	3.79	1.43	4.17	1.33	0.001	0.02
Security assistance	2.54	1.33	2.62	1.25	0.44	0.001
Safety concerns	3.04	1.47	3.02	1.62	0.89	0.001
Free movement	3.45	1.37	3.65	1.45	0.089	0.005
Health	3.41	1.47	3.77	1.37	0.003	0.02
Arrest	2.18	1.46	1.82	1.41	0.002	0.02
Food	2.97	1.23	3.15	1.20	0.081	0.005
Water	3.19	1.32	3.65	1.41	0.001	0.03
Accommodation	3.32	1.33	3.68	1.33	0.001	0.02
Access education	3.51	1.48	3.85	1.33	0.004	0.01
Privacy	3.21	1.35	3.37	1.26	0.024	0.009
Treatment	2.65	1.44	2.29	1.43	0.003	0.02
Enslavement	2.60	1.53	1.98	1.37	0.001	0.04
Vote	3.95	1.39	4.10	1.33	0.18	0.003
Cultural practice	3.65	1.40	3.93	1.32	0.10	0.01
TOTAL	3.18		3.32			

Source: Author's own work, 2024

significant differences on issues such as privacy, access to education, accommodation and feeling enslaved among others. Once more, the effect sizes showed minimal impact with values less than 0.06 (Cohen, 1988).

6.5 Analysis of variance on location

A final ANOVA was performed to find out if the place where the IDPs found themselves (host community influence) had an impact on their perceptions of the respect of their human rights. For the purpose of this analysis the respondents were categorised into groups labelled as 1 = Niger State, 2 = Edo State and 3 = Kaduna State. Results of the ANOVA are presented in Table 7.

Results of the ANOVA based on location proved to be different from the previous two on age groups and gender because statistically significant differences were observed on all human rights variables, except the opportunity to vote. This prompted a closer examination of the results using post hoc tests and multiple comparisons. It became clear that results from Edo State demonstrated statistical significance compared to Niger and Kaduna States. The mean values on Table 7 were also helpful in confirming the differences as N2 (Edo State) had generally higher mean values than N1 (Niger State) and N3 (Kaduna State). To determine the extent of the difference, the effect differences were calculated using Eta square (Pallant, 2013: 263). Many of the effect sizes proved to be quite large as they were greater than 0.14 (Cohen, 1988: 284–7), while others had a medium effect (0.06) and a few had a small effect (<0.06).

7. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the human rights situation of IDPs in the Nigerian States of Niger, Edo and Kaduna. The unique approach and motivation of this study was to get the perceptions of internally displaced persons on their human rights situation within their living spaces. The need for more studies on the living conditions of IDPs, especially in

Table 7 ANOVA based on host community influence on IDPs

Human rights indicators	Location of IDPs							
	Niger state N1 = 146		Edo state N2 = 180		Kaduna state N3 = 258		p	t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Equality	2.79	1.30	4.73	0.759	2.87	1.29	0.001	0.37
Security	2.75	1.37	4.08	1.14	2.27	1.30	0.001	0.27
Communication	3.21	1.61	4.86	0.446	3.45	1.42	0.001	0.24
Religious practice	3.66	1.54	4.82	0.593	3.57	1.46	0.001	0.16
Security assistance	3.03	1.38	2.56	1.21	2.33	1.23	0.001	0.05
Safety concerns	2.76	1.28	3.78	1.78	2.67	1.31	0.001	0.10
Free movement	3.09	1.37	4.73	0.682	2.99	1.32	0.001	0.31
Health	3.10	1.37	4.82	0.509	3.01	1.37	0.001	0.33
Arrest	1.69	1.26	2.37	1.81	1.93	1.18	0.001	0.03
Food	2.86	1.23	2.94	0.97	3.25	1.33	0.002	0.02
Water	3.08	1.30	4.22	0.900	3.05	1.48	0.001	0.15
Accommodation	3.09	1.17	4.45	0.793	3.07	1.40	0.001	0.22
Access education	3.12	1.47	4.54	0.793	3.38	1.44	0.001	0.17
Privacy	3.12	1.15	3.69	1.18	3.00	1.41	0.001	0.05
Treatment	2.14	1.22	2.50	1.75	2.63	1.30	0.004	0.02
Enslavement	2.11	1.35	2.27	1.73	2.41	1.36	0.141	0.006
Vote	3.72	1.55	4.64	0.817	3.76	1.42	0.001	0.09
Cultural practice	3.39	1.37	4.82	0.512	3.30	1.38	0.001	0.25
TOTAL	2.93		3.93		2.94			

Source: Author's own work, 2024

sub-Saharan Africa was established through a review of extant literature ([Adesina et al., 2020](#); [Akpoghome, 2015](#); [Cantor et al., 2021](#)). Hence this study adopted a more holistic approach to gain a perspective on how the IDPs experienced various aspects of their human rights on a daily basis.

Findings from the analysis of demographic data in this study revealed that men and women are equally affected by the ongoing humanitarian crises in the three states. However, it is also apparent from the demographic statistics that there is an imminent social crisis within the IDP population considering the large number of young people who are unemployed and have little or no formal education. A study by [Olufadewa et al. \(2022\)](#) on the mental health challenges of IDPs reached a similar conclusion and emphasised the need for the government to take measures to address the situation.

This study has also revealed that the respondents are in desperate need of life supplies such as food, water, shelter and sleep. As highlighted by Maslow (1948), these are basic physiological needs required to sustain life and, therefore, should not be compromised. The seriousness of this need is evident in the results of the descriptive analysis and confirmed by the exploratory analysis. While previous studies have articulated similar concerns ([Cantor and Woolley, 2020](#); [Dirikgil, 2022](#); [Dunn, 2018](#)), this study goes further by using multiple data analysis methods to emphasis the urgency with which life-saving items should be sent to the IDPs.

It is compelling at this point to reflect on the inalienable natural rights ([Locke, 1689](#)) of the IDPs who participated in this study considering that they are longing for basic subsistence needs such as sleep, rest, water and food. These findings are clear evidence that both human rights theory ([Locke, 1689](#)) and human rights principles ([UN, 1948](#)) are in clear violation in the case of the IDPs.

Another conclusion from the results of the analysis of variance conducted, is that perceptions on the experience of human rights vary between age groups. Younger respondents demonstrated a more positive outlook in their perception of their human rights

experiences, with higher mean values observed among this age group. However, there was little difference between the mean scores of the men and women. This conclusion may be explained by the fact that younger persons are more physically active and can easily move around in search for ways to satisfy their subsistence needs.

In the context of Maslow theory of needs, it is evident from the findings of this study that the respondents are motivated to meet basic survival needs at the bottom of the hierarchy (Maslow, 1943). However, the fact that the participants in this study expressed the motivation to acquire needs that are at different levels in Maslow's hierarchy such as food, water and sleep (physiological needs), safety and security needs and desire to be with family members and love ones (belonging and love) demonstrates the reservations with Maslow's idea that human needs are met in hierarchical order. It is evident from the findings of this study that human beings are motivated to simultaneously meet needs at multiple levels of the hierarchy. This reservation on Maslow theory of needs is shared by Cianci and Gambrel (2003) when they question if Maslow's theory can be applied in collectivist culture.

7.1 Implications

Below are practical and theoretical implications which emanate from this study.

Firstly, the dire need for improvements in the human rights situation of the IDPs in this study calls for immediate action from the global community, but primarily from the local authorities to stop the cause(s) of internal displacement. The livelihoods of IDPs lie within their communities of permanent residence therefore ending conflicts will enable them to return to their own supplies.

Secondly, this study has established, through literature on both human rights theory and human rights principles that human rights are *de facto* natural rights thereby necessitating an imperative from the human community to ensure assistance is rendered to the IDPs in need. In essence, this is what makes us human, otherwise we would no longer hold claim to our humanity.

Thirdly, to eliminate the perpetuation of social and economic deprivation among IDPs and their families, it is incumbent on the national and local authorities in Nigeria to ensure that IDPs, especially the youth have access to education and employment. The high levels of unemployment and youth out of school revealed in this study are indicators of future social tensions if left unattended.

At a theoretical level, this study has revealed the need for deep reflection on the theoretical grounding of Maslow's theory of needs. While the conceptual grounding of the theory on the constant motivation in human beings to improve on their status in life can still be validated, it is clear from this study that human motivation can aspire for multiple levels of acquisition at the same time.

This study also submits that the validity of the human rights theory is limited to the extent that it provides for a mechanism to ensure that the rights (natural and human) are upheld. Upon reflection, one wonders what the value of human theory is to IDPs whose only hold to life is the immediate breathe. Hence, the appeal from this study for a systematic human rights implementation paradigm that goes beyond the United Nations principles that rely on the goodwill of states and individuals.

7.2 Limitations of the study

The personal nature of human rights prescripts implies that the generalisability of the research conclusions are dependent on the willingness of the respondents to share truthful details about their personal circumstances. This study recognises that some respondents might not be willing to disclose such intimate details and so acknowledge the limitations that this may place on some inferences. Similarly, although the sample size in this study is

statistically sound, it is important to put a limitation on the fact that the views expressed in this study do not represent the opinions of all IDPs in Niger, Edo and Kaduna States. There is therefore no intention in this study to make this claim.

7.3 Future research

Given the limitations of this study, it is recommended that further studies be undertaken to include the views of more IDPs. It is also recommended that future studies include a qualitative paradigm which could give the respondents an opportunity to share more detailed information on their circumstances. Interviews and focus group discussions could encourage the participants to open up and share greater insights about their human rights situation.

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