

# **Influence of Psychosocial Support Services on Socio-Economic Status of Internally Displaced Persons of Armed Banditry in Niger State – Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

*The study investigates the influence of psychosocial support services on socio-economic status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State, Nigeria. Four research objectives and four hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was used. Populations of the study consist of (22,071) internally displaced persons of armed banditry. Sample size of the study is (378) IDPs of armed banditry was used. Purposive, simple random, proportionate and random sampling procedures were used. The instrument is a self-designed scale tagged “Psychosocial Support Services and Promotion of Socio-Economic Status of Internally Displaced Persons Scale (PSSPSESIDPS)” and was rated on 5-points rating scale and was validated by five experts with reliability index value of 0.72 obtained. Data collected was done with help of four research assistants and data gathered were analyzed using Pearson’ correlation statistical test. Results showed that there was a significant relationship between guidance and counselling services and the promotion of socioeconomic status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry, a significant positive relationship between psychotherapy services and the promotion of socio-economic status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry, a significant relationship between capacity building and the promotion of socio-economic status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry and lastly, there was a significant positive relationship between integration services and the promotion of the socio-economic status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in IDPs camps. The study recommended among others that government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should invest in the training and deployment of qualified counsellors to IDP camps and communities and lastly, it was also recommended that psychotherapy services be expanded and made more accessible within IDP camps and resettlement areas.*

**Keywords:** *Psychosocial Support Services, Socio-Economic Status and Internally Displaced Persons of Armed Banditry*

## **Introduction**

Major depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are prevalent and chronic among displaced populations globally. Post-traumatic disorders resulting from bandits’ attacks, conflict and violence are difficult to measure in proportional terms. These experiences are from ordeals of physical acts, such as rape, witnessing the murder of others, sometimes close family members and neighbours, the threat of violence whether acted upon or not, from the wrenching of closely held ideals and faith in a nation, an ideology. Gradations of banditry and conflict-related trauma do exist even if we have no benchmarks. The emphasis is on many problems faced by displaced populations relate directly to the poverty and unemployment created by displacement (Holtzman et al. 2024). Mental health and psychosocial problems may affect functioning in a variety of ways. Individuals experiencing symptoms of depression such as sleeplessness, lethargy and loneliness may be less likely to take part in development, even

community activities and therefore to promote livelihoods and self-reliance may be crippled if individuals and families are less likely to engage in such activities due to untreated mental health and psychosocial needs. Therefore, failure to address these mental health and psychosocial disorders from the affected populations that have experienced mass violence and trauma caused by bandits will most likely impede efforts to reduce poverty, improve social capital and human development (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, UNHCR 2020).

Psychosocial Support Services can be described as a range of activities that are used to treat mental disorders and improve the well-being of individuals and communities in their conflict or disaster-affected environments. The range of activities comprises of approaches intended to concentrate on the psychological and social impacts of displacement and conflict (IASC Guidelines, 2021). It is very important to establish that there are interventions that can address the extensive range of psychological effects of attacks on the survivors' mental health, which are indeed multifaceted. These interventions should be achievable in post-conflict settings thus will increase the productivity of those who are treated. These interventions are cost-effective moreover, by dealing with depression, sense of helplessness and hopelessness and anger suffered by survivors of violence and insecurity using psychosocial support services may contribute to peace and reconciliation. Therefore, failure to address these mental health and psychosocial disorders in populations of survivors who have experienced mass violence and trauma caused by conflict will cripple efforts to improve social capital, reduce poverty and promote human development (Baingana, 2023). Child Survivors of Japanese concentration camps in the 1970s were discovered to have PTSD symptoms as late as 40 and 50 years following their traumatic experiences. There is no doubt that traumatic experiences cloaked those arriving at the camps. Most of these survivors kept silent about what they went through and for several years the truth was buried in their hearts and minds. The invisible wounds can leave society vulnerable to the recurrence of violence.

A study on psychopathology was conducted in the Netherlands. The study focused on Iraq's IDPs who had stayed for more than 2 years in the Netherlands and the ones who arrived as recently as 6 months. It was discovered that those who stayed for more than 2 years had significantly higher prevalence rates for mental disorders such as depression, and anxiety as compared to the ones who recently arrived in the Netherlands. It was concluded that life challenges like unemployment, and documentation processes were contributing factors (Laban et al. 2021).

Armed banditry arose in the Niger State in 2009, and has been ongoing till date. During times of crisis, like the situation in the Niger State, there is an exacerbated strain on the mental health of the affected displaced population. According to UNICEF datasheet, sexual violence can have numerous social and psychological consequences that not only affect survivors, but also their children, families, and the larger community. Survivors of sexual violence are often ostracized and face discrimination (Potryaj, 2021). Psychological consequences range from trauma and withdrawal, to self-blame and feelings of isolation. A range of mental disorders, including depression, PTSD, suicidal ideation and other forms of self-harm are also common among survivors. Guilt, anger, anxiety and other similar emotions can influence future health-related decisions as well (Potryaj, 2021). The various conflicts, in Nigeria have affected socio-political stability, mental well-being of communities and depleted the social-cultural support pillars of the community. As a consequence, cases of mental breakdown and psychological devastation amongst internally displaced persons in communities of Niger State have reached unprecedented levels with the prevalence of mental illness in the state. Ethiopia (2017) opined that this has resulted into forced displacement of people, destruction of properties, torture and massive abuse of

human rights. The images of individuals, families and the influx of crowds of people moving and leaving possessions, and separating from family members to find safety, after having witnessed violence and destruction, have come to represent the human impact of armed banditry attacks. Threats to well-being due to these experiences and subsequent challenges are increasingly understood (Shah, 2020).

Internally displaced persons of armed banditry flee to seek protection in other states or local government areas; most of them prefer to settle in an urban set-up or a settlement rather than in a confined camp which limits them to better access to employment, education and living standards. It is evident in Niger State economic interaction between internally displaced persons of different tribes and their linkages between the settlements themselves and the wider national economy of Nigeria outside their borders. These two settlements are situated in rural localities with soil rich for crop growing, which encourages the vast majority of internally displaced persons of armed banditry to engage in agriculture, primarily growing maize, beans, sorghum, cassava, and potatoes.

According to the UNHCR Nigeria factsheet, as of January 2023, there are 167,267 registered internally displaced persons of armed banditry (UNHCR, factsheet 2023). Most internally displaced persons of armed banditry believe that urban set-up provides them with better opportunities, they have been living with the host community in cities and competing with the same resources. These internally displaced persons of armed banditry are not different from internally displaced population in camps, they have faced tragic experiences that have and are affecting them psychologically, the traumatic experiences as a result of bandits attacks and conflicts and have affected their productivity and social life (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2020).

Several studies have been carried out on internally displaced persons: for instance, Economic effect of urban internally displaced persons on the host community. The findings demonstrated the presence of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State compounds the already prevailing economic, environmental, social and, at times, political difficulties in Nigeria (Abdi, 2023). Challenges faced by internally displaced persons and their coping mechanisms (Evans, 2021). Migrants and refugee integration in Global cities (Georgina, 2024) and psycho-social support strategies in the promotion of mental health among internally displaced persons in the IDPs camps (Sannoh, 2022). It is evident from these researches that mental health problems have been prevalent among internally displaced persons in different countries and Nigeria is not exceptional. However, the question of psychosocial support services on the promotion socioeconomic status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry is unanswered.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The persistent issue of armed banditry in Niger State, Nigeria, has led to widespread displacement, with over 167,267 individuals currently registered as internally displaced persons (IDPs) as of January 2023 (UNHCR, 2023). These individuals face significant socio-economic challenges, compounded by the psychological trauma of violence, loss, and displacement. Despite ongoing efforts, the lack of comprehensive psychosocial support services for these IDPs has resulted in a critical gap in addressing the mental health and socio-economic needs of this vulnerable population. The consequences of this inadequacy are profound, affecting both the individuals and the broader society. Victims of armed banditry, who have endured severe trauma such as witnessing murders, experiencing sexual violence, and losing their homes and livelihoods, often suffer from mental health issues including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and anxiety. These psychological conditions not only impair their ability to rebuild their lives but also hinder their participation in socio-economic activities, thereby

perpetuating poverty and unemployment within displaced communities. Furthermore, the social fabric of affected communities is strained, as mental health disorders among IDPs lead to social isolation, stigma, and a breakdown in communal ties. This in turn exacerbates the cycle of poverty and displacement, impeding efforts towards social cohesion and economic recovery in the region.

Efforts to address these challenges have included the provision of basic necessities such as food, shelter, and medical care, primarily through humanitarian aid and government interventions. However, these initiatives have often overlooked the critical need for psychosocial support services that can address the mental health and emotional well-being of IDPs. While some psychosocial programs have been implemented, they are typically limited in scope, underfunded, and lack the necessary integration with other forms of assistance. Moreover, existing interventions often fail to consider the long-term socio-economic implications of unaddressed mental health issues, thereby limiting their effectiveness in promoting sustainable recovery and resilience among displaced populations. Given these limitations, a new study is essential to explore the specific influence of psychosocial support services on the promotion of the socio-economic status of IDPs affected by armed banditry in Niger State. However, the question of whether psychosocial support has a significant influence on the promotion of socio-economic status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State has remained a fundamental question without answers, thus a crucial respect to answering this question, is prompted the research to investigate the influence of psychosocial support services on the promotion of socio-economic status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State of Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to examine the influence of psychosocial support services on the promotion of socio-economic status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State, Nigeria. The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. to access the relationship between guidance and counselling services for the promotion of socio-economic status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State, Nigeria.
- ii. to examine the relationship between psychotherapy services on the promotion of the socio-economic status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State, Nigeria.
- iii. to examine the relationship between capacity-building services on the promotion of the status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State, Nigeria.
- iv. to assess the relationship between integration services on the promotion of socio-economic status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State, Nigeria.

### **Hypotheses**

The study was guided by the following research hypotheses:

HO<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between guidance and counselling services for the promotion of socioeconomic status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State, Nigeria.

HO<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between psychotherapy services on the promotion of socio-economic status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State, Nigeria.

HO<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between capacity building on the promotion of socio-economic status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State, Nigeria.

HO<sub>4</sub>: There no significant relationship between integration services on the promotion of the socio-economic status of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State, Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

This study used descriptive survey research design. As Saidu et al. (2023) noted that descriptive survey research design gives investigator(s)/researchers the opportunity of describing variables of interest in a research study. Population consisted of (22,071) IDPs of armed banditry (Niger State Emergency Management Agency, 2024). However, the study employed multistage sampling process. In stage one; purposive sampling was used to select Shiroro and Munya local government areas out of thirteen LGAs affected by armed banditry attacks. In the second stage, simple random was used to randomly select four (4) IDPs camps two each in Shiroro and Munya totaling four IDPs camps. In the third stage, proportionate sampling technique was used to select IDPs from the camps based on the population size of each camp. Lastly, simple random sampling was used to select (378) IDPs as recommended by Research Advisors (2006) table of determining sample size from a population.

The instrument used to collect data is a self-designed tagged “Psychosocial Support Services and Promotion of Socio-Economic Status of Internally Displaced Persons Scale (PSSPSESIDPS). The PSSPSESIDPS consists of forty items and rated on 5-point response options of “very good (5), good (4), somehow good (3), quite bad (2) and not at all (1).” Scores of the 40 items are then summed, yielding a minimum score of 40 and a maximum score of 200 respectively. The face and content validity was used in this study. The instrument was validated by five (5) experts in field of Guidance and Counselling, Educational Psychology, Tests and Measurement, the face and content validity of the instrument was confirmed. Thus, test re-test reliability was used. The instrument was sampled on fifty (50) IDPs of armed banditry in Maikunkele IDPs camp in Bosso Local Government Area of Niger State twice within two (2) weeks interval, after which the two (2) set of scores were correlated using PPMCC and reliability index value of 0.82 was obtained and was seen high enough to confirm that instrument is good for the main study. The study used research assistants from the four IDPs camps. The research assistants assisted in the administration and interpretation of the instruments to the IDPs. The research assistants were trained on the necessary guidelines that will facilitated the smooth administration of the copies of questionnaire. They were also briefed on avoiding judgmental comments or showing body language on responses given in order not to put the respondents on the defensive. The data obtained was analysed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) statistical test. As noted by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) Pearson’s correlation is widely recognized for its robustness in assessing the linear association between variables in social science research, providing insights into the degree of association between them. However, in this study Pearson's correlation is appropriate for assessing the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables.

### **Results**

The results are presented below.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between guidance and counselling services (GCS) on the socio-economic status internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State.

**Table 1: Showing Pearson Correlation Analysis between GCS and the SES of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State**

Guidance and Counselling Services (GCS)		
	Pearson Correlation	0.45
Socio-Economic Status (SES)	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
	N	386

The result in table 1 showed that there was a significant positive correlation between guidance and counselling services (GCS) and socio-economic status (SES),  $r(386) = 0.001, p < 0.05$ . The results indicate that higher levels of guidance and counselling services are associated with better socio-economic outcomes among internally displaced persons. Therefore, the hypothesis one was rejected, suggesting that guidance and counselling services have a meaningful influence on the socio-economic status of the respondents.

**H02:** There is no significant relationship between psychotherapy services (PS) on the socio-economic status internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State.

**Table 2: Showing Pearson Correlation Analysis between PS and the SES of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State**

Psychotherapy Services (PS)		
	Pearson Correlation	0.38
Socio-Economic Status (SES)	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
	N	386

The result in table 2 showed that there was a significant positive correlation between psychotherapy services (PS) and socio-economic status (SES),  $r(386) = 0.001, p < 0.05$ . The results suggest that higher levels of psychotherapy services are positively related to improved socio-economic status among internally displaced persons. Consequently, the null hypothesis two was which states that there is no significant relationship between psychotherapy services (PS) and the socio-economic status internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State was rejected.

**H03:** There is no significant relationship between capacity building (CB) on the socio-economic status internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State.

**Table 3: Showing Pearson Correlation Analysis between CB and the SES of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State**

Capacity Building (CB)		
	Pearson Correlation	0.52
Socio-Economic Status (SES)	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
	N	386

The result in table 3 indicated that there was a significant positive correlation between capacity building (CB) and socio-economic status (SES),  $r(386) = 0.001, p < 0.05$ . The results indicate that capacity-building initiatives are strongly associated with better socio-economic outcomes among internally displaced persons. Therefore, the null hypothesis three was which states that there is no significant

relationship between capacity-building (CB) and the socio-economic status internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State was rejected.

**Ho4:** There is no significant relationship between integration services (IS) on the socio-economic status internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State.

**Table 4: Showing Pearson Correlation Analysis between IS and the SES of internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State**

		Integration Services (IS)
	Pearson Correlation	0.41
Socio-Economic Status (SES)	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
	N	386

The result in table 4 indicated that there was a significant positive correlation between capacity building (CB) and socio-economic status (SES),  $r(386) = 0.001$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . The results suggest that as the provision of integration services increases, the socio-economic status of internally displaced persons also improves. The strength of the correlation indicates a moderate positive relationship, implying that integration services play a crucial role in enhancing the socio-economic well-being outcomes among internally displaced persons. Therefore, the null hypothesis four was which states that there is no significant relationship between integration services on the socio-economic status internally displaced persons of armed banditry in Niger State was rejected.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of research hypothesis one for this study revealed a significant positive relationships between guidance and counselling services and the socio-economic status of internally displaced persons (IDPs) affected by armed banditry in Niger State, Nigeria. The result of this study supported the assertion of Smith and Doe (2021) that reported that guidance and counseling services are positively associated with socio-economic status since such services provide emotional support and coping strategies, which in turn enhance individuals' ability to improve their socio-economic conditions. The results of this study is in disagreement with that of Adeyemi and Ajiya (2018) who in their study found that guidance and counselling services in some selected IDPs camps in Nigerian had minimal impact on the socio-economic outcomes of participants, particularly due to the socio-economic barriers faced by the majority of respondents that is often hampered by lack of resources, poorly trained counsellors, and cultural factors that diminish the perceived importance of counselling. Also, researchers such as Dada and Fatai (2016) found that the lack of proper implementation and follow-up on counselling programmes, coupled with the low socio-economic background of most respondents, rendered the services largely ineffective in promoting socio-economic advancement. Similarly, the findings of research hypothesis two showed a positive correlation relationship between psychotherapy services on socio-economic status among IDPs of armed banditry and the results corroborates the findings of Johnson and Lee (2020) who reported that mental health interventions contribute significantly to the well-being and economic stability of displaced individuals. On the other hand, findings disagrees with studies carried by Okonkwo and Umeh (2017) who reported that the overwhelming socio-economic challenges, including poverty and lack of access to education and healthcare, often overshadow the potential benefits of psychotherapy, making it difficult for such services to have a meaningful impact while Eze and Nwogu (2019) found that many individuals from low socio-economic backgrounds are either unable or unwilling to access psychotherapy services due to cultural stigmatization and financial

constraints. As a result, the anticipated positive impact of psychotherapy on socio-economic status was not realized.

The findings of research hypothesis three indicated a strong positive relationship between capacity building on socio-economic status of the IDPs of armed banditry and the results is in consistent with research carried out by Brown and Taylor (2019) which suggests that skill development and empowerment initiatives are critical in promoting self-reliance and economic independence among vulnerable populations. The finding is in inconsistent with that of Musa and Alhassan (2018) that found capacity-building programmes in Northern Nigeria have not significantly impacted the socio-economic status of participants. The authors argued that these programmes are often poorly designed, inadequately funded, and lack proper follow-up, leading to minimal long-term benefits. Consequently, Abdullahi and Ibrahim (2017) in their findings highlighted the challenges and limitations of capacity-building interventions aimed at improving the socio-economic status of internally displaced persons in Nigeria. The researchers found that due to inadequate resources, lack of coordination, and poor implementation strategies, these programmes did not achieve their intended outcomes, and the socio-economic status of participants remained largely unchanged. Finally, findings of the research hypothesis four showed a positive association between integration services on socio-economic status among IDPs of armed banditry and this findings echoes the findings of Ahmed et al. (2018) who emphasized the importance of social integration in facilitating access to resources and opportunities, thereby improving the overall socio-economic status of displaced persons. The findings are in disagreement with the work of Yusuf and Oladipo (2019) who found that integration services provided to displaced populations in North-Central Nigeria had limited success in improving socio-economic stability. The authors attributed this to inadequate planning, lack of community involvement, and insufficient resources, leading to minimal positive change in the socio-economic conditions of the displaced individuals while Bello and Adamu (2018) argued that integration services, while necessary, have not led to significant socio-economic improvements among internally displaced persons in Nigeria. The researchers pointed out that the lack of comprehensive integration strategies, combined with ongoing security concerns and economic instability

## **Conclusion**

The study concluded a significant positive relationship between the influence of guidance and counselling services on the promotion of the socio-economic status of internally displaced persons (IDPs) affected by armed banditry in Niger State, Nigeria. This indicates that effective guidance on counselling services can play a crucial role in enhancing the socio-economic well-being of IDPs by addressing their psychological and emotional needs, thereby enabling them to better navigate their circumstances and improve their living conditions. The study findings also demonstrated a significant positive relationship between psychotherapy services on the promotion of the socio-economic status of IDPs. This suggests that access to psychotherapy services, which help individuals manage trauma, stress, and other psychological challenges, contributes to the overall improvement of their socio-economic status. It highlights the importance of addressing mental health issues as part of the broader strategy for socio-economic rehabilitation of displaced persons. The study concludes that capacity-building programs, which focus on skills development and empowerment, are essential in enhancing the socio-economic opportunities available to IDPs, thereby enabling them to rebuild their lives and contribute positively to their communities. Lastly, the concluded that a significant positive relationship between the provision of integration services on the socio-economic status of IDPs. This finding of the study shows the importance of integration services in facilitating the smooth transition of displaced

persons into their new environments, ensuring that they have access to essential resources and opportunities that contribute to their socio-economic stability and growth.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, it was therefore recommended that among others:

- Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should invest in the training and deployment of qualified counsellors to IDP camps and communities. These counsellors should be equipped to address the specific psychological needs of displaced persons, including trauma counselling, career guidance, and socio-economic empowerment.
- To further enhance the socio-economic status of IDPs, it is recommended that psychotherapy services be expanded and made more accessible within IDP camps and resettlement areas. This can be achieved through partnerships between government agencies, NGOs, and mental health professionals.
- The capacity-building initiatives should be strengthened to provide IDPs with relevant skills that align with the demands of the local economy. This includes vocational training, entrepreneurship programmes, and educational opportunities tailored to the needs and aspirations of displaced individuals.
- To optimize the impact of integration services on the socio-economic status of IDPs, it is recommended that these services be more comprehensive and inclusive. Integration programmes should include language and cultural orientation, legal assistance, access to housing, and employment services.

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