



INFORMATION NEED AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF FEMALE INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS AND EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN BORNO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the information needs and seeking behaviour of female internally displaced persons and their experiences of Sexual Gender Based Violence in Borno State, Nigeria. This identified the various needs of female IDPs who have had experiences of SGBV. It also provides an understanding of the sources of information and ways in which female IDPs in Borno State seek for information. The sample for the study was drawn from three local governments: Gwoza, Kondunga and Monguno in Borno State. A quantitative research approach and descriptive research design was adopted in the study. Semi-structured questionnaire were used in process of data collection from the respondents. Descriptive statistics of mean (3.26 mean benchmark) and standard deviation were used in data. The findings of the study revealed that some

of the most critical needs of female IDPs was accessing food for themselves and their families (3.32), security and protection (3.29), education (3.29), particularly for their children, Access to healthcare (3.25) and better accommodation (3.26). They expressed a desire for elementary/nursery school for toddlers. They also expressed need for economic empowerment, particularly through small businesses like grinding machines, to support themselves and their families (3.19). The study found that their most preferred sources of information were consulting doctors and nurses at health centers, listening to radio and community representatives. In conclusion, the need to access food is seen as the most prominent need for which internally displaced women and girls require information. Thus, the correct identification of need and channel or sources of satisfying the need is important in order to record effective interventions. Government and non-government organisations must be committed to conducting frequent needs determination assessments of the target group.

Keywords: *Sexual Gender Based Violence, Information Behaviour, Information need, Information seeking, Internally Displaced Persons.*

Introduction

Sexual Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) continues to be a prevalent global issue, entrenched in structural gender inequities and societal power dynamics. It crosses cultural, economic, and geographic boundaries, causing significant physical, psychological, and social suffering to individuals and communities (U.S. Department of State, 2022). The consequences of SGBV include damaging physical, health and mental repercussions such as unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, substance abuse, suicidal ideation (WHO, 2021). Globally, it is reported that one in three women have experienced SGBV at least once in their life. Globally, according to UNICEF (2021) 650 million (or 1 in 5) girls and women alive today have been subjected to SGBV as children, and over 350 million have been raped or sexually assaulted. WHO in 2021 reported incidences of rape and other horrific forms of violence in the Tigray region of Ethiopia amid worsening humanitarian crisis. However, Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest number of victims, with over 79 million girls and women affected (UNICEF, 2021). Thus, humanitarian crisis an offshoot of armed conflict and wars across the globe are major sponsors of SGBV.

A study in Syria, MacTavish, (2016) found that women and girls were deterred from reporting cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) due to a lack of trust in the reporting process or agency, fear of reprisal, and the stigma and criticism they may face from the community. The survivors' tendency to maintain a non-disclosure stance is influenced by their profound feelings of guilt, which lead them to believe that they will be unable to elicit public sympathy (Ullman *et al.*, 2020). The failure to disclose instances of violence and abuse has been identified as a behavioural trait among internally displaced individuals residing in IDP camps. Failing to discuss the experience

of violence heightens the susceptibility of displaced individuals. Women and girls face obstacles in obtaining healthcare services, justice, education, employment, economic activities, and knowledge that could empower them to participate in decision-making on problems that impact their lives (John et al., 2020). The report from internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Northern Iraq highlighted the heightened vulnerability of women in Chamchamal. Specifically, these women lacked crucial information regarding access to food, water, housing, and educational facilities for their children. Oftentimes, women lack direct access to communication channels like mobile phones and have little information regarding aid in general (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2014).

United Nations Children's Fund (2022) identified the primary information requirements of internally displaced persons (IDPs) as encompassing essential relief services such as healthcare, food, housing, and clothing. Additionally, they require information on income-generating opportunities to support their family. The user need knowledge regarding the security situation, strategies for avoiding potential risks, as well as the criteria and procedures for enrolling for assistance. Sambo (2017) stated that internally displaced persons have essential information needs upon arriving at their temporary location. These needs include access to food, shelter, clean water, healthcare, education, security, and clothing. Meeting these needs is crucial for their survival and to prevent negative social, cultural, and security consequences for both the IDPs and the host communities.

Every day, individuals, groups of people, and organisations engage with their surroundings. These interactions create perceptions that serve as the foundation for choices and decisions made to choose a certain course of action to reach a planned goal or target. The decisions and choices are influenced by the information obtained during the contact, which individuals are exposed to or have access to (Powers et al., 2017). Therefore, the manner in which individuals perceive and engage with the information available to them influences the decisions they make and the actions they do. During the process of interacting with the environment, new information is created. Additionally, when this new information is coupled with previous knowledge, complex information is generated. An individual's information behaviour encompasses the actions they do to identify their information needs on a certain topic, the methods they employ to search for information, and the ways in which they utilise the acquired knowledge (Tubachi & Kumbhargoudar, 2018).

Information is fundamental to human existence; it is a critical resource for the development and advancement of any society or people. Internally displaced persons have basic need for information on how to get food, shelter, potable water, healthcare, education, security and clothing. Persons facing challenges of displacement as a result of armed conflicts need information that will enable them manage stress, combat anxiety, put an end to their current experience, survive and lead a better life, or cope with their

current realities (George & Adelaja, 2022). Accessing and effectively using the right information will empower women and girls living in IDP camps by equipping them with the ability to make informed choices, create effective and long-lasting strategies for survival, and actively pursue solutions to combat further experience of sexual gender-based violence. An understanding of the information needs and seeking behaviour in terms of how people interact with information by firstly articulating their information needs and how they go about seeking information to survive the experience of SGBV or as an adaptive tool enabling individuals cope and adjust to changing circumstances and experience is important to addressing the of SGBV. This study explored the information needs and seeking behaviour of internally displaced women and girls in terms of how they defined their needs and seek for information in the face of experience of sexual gender-based violence.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate:

1. information needs of female internally displaced persons who experience sexual gender-based violence in Borno State.
2. information seeking behaviour of female internally displaced persons who experience sexual gender-based violence in Borno State.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the Chatman theory of normative behaviour. Chatman's concept of small world serves as the foundation for the theory of normative behaviour. The theory of normative behaviour seeks to elucidate the manner in which societal norms and behaviour impact information behaviour particularly within the framework of a specific social group known as a small world. A small world refers to a social group where the ideas and concerns of its members are shared and reflected upon, as stated by Chatman (1999). In a microcosmic environment, routine actions are regarded as benchmarks and universally accepted as the shared way of being. The theory of normative behaviour provides a foundational comprehension of how individuals interact with knowledge, including how it is viewed, valued, comprehended, and utilized in various settings and situations within a limited environment. According to Chatman (2000), individuals in a small community often have comparable information behaviours and have a common knowledge of how to obtain and exchange information. These behaviours have an impact on the way people perceive things when working together, making them more aware of the information they need to know.

Literature Review

Absolutely, in situations of armed conflict and displacement, such as those experienced in Borno state, Nigeria, information becomes an invaluable resource for individuals, particularly internally displaced persons (IDPs). How individuals articulate their needs, seek, and utilize information can significantly impact their ability to cope, respond, and survive in such challenging circumstances, particularly concerning issues like sexual and

gender-based violence (SGBV). Effective communication and access to accurate information can empower IDPs to seek support services, report incidents of SGBV, and access resources for protection and assistance (Philbrick et al., 2022). Conversely, misinformation or lack of information can exacerbate vulnerabilities and hinder individuals' ability to access essential services or support networks. Therefore, understanding the information needs, communication preferences, and barriers faced by IDPs is crucial for humanitarian organizations and policymakers to develop targeted interventions and support mechanisms that address the specific challenges faced by affected populations, including those related to SGBV. Moreover, ensuring that information dissemination channels are accessible, culturally sensitive, and gender-inclusive can enhance the effectiveness of response efforts and contribute to the protection and well-being of affected individuals (Nhendodzashe & Nhendo, 2013).

Muthoni's (2019) study on the information-seeking behaviour of women in Kenya concerning protection from sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) investigated how women in Kenya seek information for this purpose. The data collection involved a questionnaire administered online to a sample of Kenyan women, with 24 participants responding to the survey. The research findings highlighted that women in Kenya utilize a variety of sources to seek information and assistance to protect themselves from SGBV. These sources include both informal channels, such as family and friends (45%), and formal sources, such as medical practitioners like doctors and nurses (54%), gynecologists and obstetricians (50%). Additionally, women turn to other information sources such as radio, television, smartphones, books, newspapers, magazines, and the internet. The study revealed that the internet, smartphones, and books are among the most frequently used sources of information on SGBV due to the convenience, privacy, and anonymity they offer to respondents.

Sambo (2017) conducted a study focusing on the information needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The research aimed to identify and establish the information needs of IDPs, particularly those affected by insurgency in Borno State, Nigeria. The study employed a quantitative and evaluative research design. For sampling, census sampling technique was utilized to select the most affected local governments in Borno State camps, while simple random technique was used to select the most affected five local governments out of the twenty affected by insurgency. These local governments included Ngala, Dikwa, Bama, Damboa, and Chibok, and 500 questionnaires were distributed to the IDPs. Data collection involved interviews with respondents, with findings revealing that 64% of IDPs were female and 36% were male. The study identified various information needs among IDPs, including security (100%), health information (98%), family and relationship advice (95%), updates on current events (93%), financial information (91%), life decisions (90%), property-related information (74%), and shelter information (67%), among others and with a majority of IDPs seeking this information through community networks and humanitarian agencies.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative research method and a descriptive survey research design. Quantitative data was collected through a semi-structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The semi-structured nature of the questionnaire allowed for open-ended questions that elucidated rich responses due to the nature of SGBV. Simple random sampling was used in selecting the number of respondents for the quantitative study from each of the 3 local governments to represent the internally displaced persons' camps in Borno state. Using a simple random sampling method ensured that each unit in the sample had an equal probability of being selected. This technique provides an accurate and unbiased estimation of the parameters of a homogeneous population (Singh & Masuku, 2014). Therefore, the semi-structured questionnaire was administered to 250 participants from the general population of 667 women drawn from Konduga, Gwoza and Monguno Local government areas in Borno State. Frequency counts, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the demographic information and answer the research questions in the study. The mean benchmark for the study is 3.26.

Sample size distribution

The sample size of a population is instrumental in increasing the quality of evidence-based research. Selecting a sample size involves defining the number of individuals selected to represent the entire population. (Singh & Masuku, 2014). Therefore, the Taro Yamane formula sample size was used to obtain the sample size of 250 used in the study.

Table 1: Sample size distribution

| LOCATIONS | CASES | SAMPLES |
|------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Gwoza | 400 | 150 |
| Monguno | 200 | 75 |
| Konduga | 67 | 25 |
| Total | 667 | 250 |

Results

The socio-demographic result of the research shows that majority of the participants who were female internally displaced persons in Borno State, Nigeria with experience of Sexual Gender-Based Violence were teenagers (70.8%) between the ages of 12 to 17. Furthermore, majority of the female internally displaced persons were single (70.4%). The analysis of female internally displaced persons' educational level who had experienced Sexual Gender-Based Violence showed that majority had only primary school education (62.8%). In addition, many of the female internally displaced persons who had experienced Sexual IPV were students (42.8%).

Table 2 Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

| Variable | Categories | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Age | 12-17 | 177 | 70.8 |
| | 18 and above | 73 | 29.2 |
| | Total | 250 | 100 |
| Marital status | Single | 176 | 70.4 |
| | Married | 56 | 22.4 |
| | Widowed | 8 | 3.2 |
| | Divorced | 10 | 4.0 |
| | Total | 250 | 100 |
| Highest level of education | Uneducated | 22 | 8.8 |
| | Non-formal (Islamic Education) | 57 | 22.8 |
| | Primary | 157 | 62.8 |
| | Secondary/High School | 14 | 5.6 |
| | Total | 250 | 100 |
| Occupation | Student | 107 | 42.8 |
| | Employed | 7 | 2.8 |
| | Unemployed | 82 | 32.8 |
| | Business Owner | 54 | 21.6 |
| | Total | 250 | 100 |
| Location | Gwoza | 150 | 60.0 |
| | Konduga | 25 | 10.0 |
| | Monguno | 75 | 30.0 |
| | Total | 250 | 100 |
| Living Status | Living with parents | 173 | 69.2 |
| | Living with family/husband | 60 | 24.0 |
| | Living alone | 17 | 6.8 |
| | Total | 250 | 100 |

Table 3: Information Need of Female Internally Displaced Persons who Experience Sexual Gender-Based Violence

| <i>Statements</i> | VIM Freq. | IMP Freq. | UIM Freq. | VUI Freq. | Mean \bar{x} | Standard Deviation (SD) | Remark |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Information on how to get food to feed your family | 109 | 123 | 6 | 12 | 3.32 | 0.75 | Important |
| Information on Security and how to get protection | 113 | 116 | 2 | 19 | 3.29 | 0.83 | Important |
| Information on how to go school and gain education | 112 | 112 | 13 | 13 | 3.29 | 0.79 | Important |
| Information on how to get a good or better accommodation | 98 | 134 | 4 | 14 | 3.26 | 0.75 | Important |
| Information on how to access healthcare | 99 | 130 | 5 | 16 | 3.25 | 0.78 | Important |
| Information on source of Livelihood and how to make a living to care for your family. | 86 | 142 | 5 | 17 | 3.19 | 0.78 | Important |
| Information on the News for current happenings | 89 | 137 | 6 | 18 | 3.19 | 0.80 | Important |
| Average Overall Mean | | | | | 3.26 | 0.78 | |

Source: Field Survey 2024; **Freq. = Frequency**

Table 3. shows that female internally displaced persons who experienced Sexual Gender-Based Violence in Borno State, Nigeria benchmark mean of information needs (\bar{x} =3.26). The female internally displaced persons required Important to information on: how to get food to feed their families (\bar{x} =3.32), security and how to get protection (\bar{x} =3.29), how to go to school and gain education (\bar{x} =3.29), how to get a good or better accommodation (\bar{x} =3.26) and how to access healthcare (\bar{x} =3.25). Furthermore, the female internally displaced persons who had experienced SGBV in Borno State, Nigeria also required important information needs on: source of livelihood and how to make a living to care for their families (\bar{x} =3.19) and current happenings (\bar{x} =3.19).

This analysis suggests that female internally displaced persons who experienced Sexual Gender-Based Violence in Borno State, Nigeria generally had very important information needs. They specifically required very important information on how to get food to feed their families, security and protection, how to go to school and get educated, how to get a good or better accommodation and how to access healthcare. Furthermore, the female internally displaced persons who had experienced Sexual Gender-Based

Violence in Borno State, Nigeria also required important information on: source of livelihood and how to make a living to care for their families and to be aware of current happenings.

Information Seeking (Sources of Information) of Female Internally Displaced Persons who Experience Sexual Gender-Based Violence

| <i>Statements</i> | SA Freq. | A Freq. | D Freq. | SD Freq. | Mean \bar{x} | Standard Deviation (SD) | Remark |
|--|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| I visit the health center and get information from the Doctor/Nurse. | 129 | 75 | 34 | 12 | 3.28 | 0.88 | Agreed |
| I get information from my friends. | 102 | 95 | 39 | 14 | 3.14 | 0.88 | Agreed |
| I get information from members of my family. | 75 | 100 | 49 | 26 | 2.90 | 0.95 | Agreed |
| I get information when I listen to the radio. | 80 | 53 | 78 | 39 | 2.70 | 1.08 | Agreed |
| I get a lot of information from watching the television. | 68 | 36 | 95 | 51 | 2.48 | 1.10 | Disagreed |
| I browse for information on my phone. | 61 | 36 | 98 | 55 | 2.41 | 1.08 | Disagreed |
| I get information from reading newspaper. | 62 | 35 | 96 | 57 | 2.41 | 1.10 | Disagreed |
| I read books to get information. | 58 | 39 | 90 | 63 | 2.37 | 1.10 | Disagreed |
| Average Overall Mean | | | | | 2.71 | 1.02 | |

Source: Field Survey 2024; **Freq. = Frequency**

Table 1.3 depicts that female internally displaced persons who experienced Sexual Gender-Based Violence in Borno State, Nigeria agreed they engaged in information seeking by consulting available sources of information ($\bar{x}=2.71$). Specifically, female internally displaced persons who experienced SGBV in Borno State, Nigeria strongly agreed they consulted doctors and nurses in health centres as sources of information ($\bar{x}=3.28$). They are indifferent about consulting the following sources of information in the information seeking process: friends ($\bar{x}=3.14$), members of the family ($\bar{x}=2.90$) and radio ($\bar{x}=2.70$). Conversely, female internally displaced persons did not watch television, browse the phone, read newspaper and books in order to source for information.

This analysis suggests that generally, female internally displaced persons who experienced Sexual Gender-Based Violence in Borno State, Nigeria engaged in information seeking by consulting available sources of information. Female internally displaced persons who experienced SGBV in Borno State, Nigeria consulted the following as sources of information: doctors and nurses in health centres, friends,

members of the family and radio. On the other hand, female internally displaced persons did not consult the following in order to source for information: the television, browse the phones, newspapers and books.

Discussion of Findings

Findings on the information needs of female internally displaced persons who have experienced Sexual Gender Based Violence in Borno State, Nigeria revealed that internally displaced females who have experienced sexual violence and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Borno State have several critical needs that require information to meet. One of the most critical needs is accessing food for themselves and their families, as well as security and protection. This finding aligns with that of Sambo (2017) where it was noted that majority of Internally Displaced Persons needed information on how to access food, security, shelter and a source of livelihood. The women also expressed their need to attend school and gain education, particularly for their children. They expressed a desire for elementary/nursery school for toddlers, but most of them cannot attend. The informal education available in these communities is Islamiya, or Islamic education. The women also express a need for economic empowerment, particularly through small businesses like grinding machines, to support themselves and their families. The study highlights the urgent need for these women to receive the necessary information and support to fulfill their needs.

On the available sources of information for female internally displaced persons who have experienced Sexual Gender Based Violence in Borno State, Nigeria. The study found that doctors and nurses health centers are the most preferred sources of information when it comes to issues relating to sexual gender-based violence (SGBV), and because these health workers are not typically members of that community, female IDPs consulting them help in protecting their identities and avoiding stigmatization. This finding is corroborated by the study conducted by Muthoni (2019) which revealed that principal sources of information were doctors and nurses. Female IDPs also seek information from friends and family, but few listen to radio. They also sometimes rely on community representatives known as "Bulama," who are gatekeepers from royal households to know what things are happening or going to happen in the community. Most of these people lack access to electricity and television, making it difficult for them to access information.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study revealed that internally displaced women and girls often have significant unmet needs for information relating to survival, protection, and education. Information on healthcare, food security, legal protection, SGBV services such as counselling and safe spaces as well as mental health services is vital for these women and girls, as they face heightened vulnerability in displacement contexts. Accessing this information through their most preferred sources and channels of accessing information is critical to ensuring their survival and ability to cope with the experience of sexual gender-based

violence. Therefore, it is important for humanitarian organisations and development partners to package and communicate information on the available provision and services put in place to meet their needs. Access to the right information that will enable them meet their needs will reduce the level of vulnerability, exposure and experience of SGBV within the community.

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