



Faith After Displacement: Religious Meaning-Making, Trauma, And Hope Among Internally Displaced Youth in Northern Nigeria

Barnabas Gabriel Akadon

University of Jos, Nigeria

Abstract

Communal violence, Armed conflict, and insurgency have displaced millions of people across Northern Nigeria, with young people among the most affected. While existing studies have examined the humanitarian, educational, and psychosocial consequences of displacement, less attention has been paid to how internally displaced youth interpret their experiences through religious beliefs and practices. This paper explores the role of religion in shaping how displaced youth understand trauma, loss, and uncertainty and how faith contributes to sustaining hope in contexts of prolonged displacement. Drawing on the concepts of lived religion and religious coping, the study investigates the ways prayer, worship, sacred narratives, and religious communities function as resources for meaning-making, identity reconstruction, and resilience. Through the use of a qualitative research design, data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with internally displaced youth aged 15–24 years in selected displacement-affected communities in Northern Nigeria. Thematic analysis will be employed to identify recurring patterns in participants' narratives of faith, trauma, and hope. The paper argues that religion serves not merely as a coping mechanism but as a dynamic interpretive framework through which displaced youth make sense of suffering, negotiate identity, and envision hopeful futures. By foregrounding youth voices, the study contributes to scholarship on migration and youth, mental well-being, and youth, religion, and culture in conflict-affected societies.

Keywords: hope; internal displacement; religious meaning-making; trauma; youth