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Climate Change-Associated Trauma among Smallholder Farmers: A Case Study of Internally Displaced Persons in Benue State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the link between climate change and trauma among internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Benue State, Nigeria. The research involved interviews and surveys with 276 smallholder farmers who were displaced due to farmer-herder conflicts and climate-related events. The majority (66.3%) had been smallholder farmers for over ten years. The study found that displacement is largely driven by a mix of environmental factors and farmer-herder land conflicts, with 85.1% facing both simultaneously. 85% of smallholder farmers have suffered significant impacts from climate change, leading to crop failures, lower yields, and loss of farmland. 77.2% of respondents experienced frequent anxiety, fear, and worries related to displacement or climate change, with 48.2% reporting constant feelings of anxiety. 78.3% experienced intrusive memories or dreams, indicating a high prevalence of post-traumatic stress symptoms. A lack of perceived community support affects 86.2% of respondents, potentially increasing vulnerability and lowering resilience to climate-related and livelihood challenges. Access to farmland and seeds/tools is seen as important, with 52.9% of respondents indicating a desire for these forms of support. The study emphasizes the need for coordinated efforts to address both environmental and psychological impacts of climate change on displaced farming communities. This study further recommends policy changes for trauma-informed support systems and climate-resilient farming practices to improve adaptive capacity and encourage recovery among IDPs in Benue State and other locations negatively impacted by climate change.

Keywords: Climate Change-Associated Trauma, Smallholder Farmers