

Original Article

Climate-Induced Migration and Human Security in Nigeria's Sahel: Analyzing Conflict Dynamics and State Response, 2020–2025

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Abstract: *There has been a sudden development of climate-induced migration as one of the factors making the problem of insecurity in ecologically vulnerable regions a burning issue and that within the Sahelian states of Nigeria in particular. The research paper investigates the interconnection between human security and environmental displacement between 2020 and 2025 where changing climatic conditions such as desertification, drought, and resource constraints have led to migratory population patterns that fuel intercommunal violence, state vulnerability, and decline in social solidarity. This study, which takes a qualitative, case study that is based on the human security perspective, uses interviews with the displaced people, heads of communities, and government officials in the leading Sahelian states inclusive of Borno, Yobe, Zamfara, and Katsina. The paper not only explores the cause and impacts of climate induced migration but also examines the response of the Nigerian state in alleviating the effects that include humanitarian assistance, climate adaptations measures and security activities. The discoveries indicate that climate-related migration is not a direct conflict driver but a major contributor to conflicts in regions with weak control and living in poverty as well as historical injustices. In addition, responses by states have been highly disjointed, reactive and under-resourced and there is not a coordinated system that combines adaptation to climate change, prevention of conflicts and development of people. The paper proposes an alternative change of traditional security methods to a strategy of involving people with the focus on resilience-building, inclusive governance, and ecological justice. Reflectively, the study provides academic and policy solutions on how Nigeria and West African governments can address climate-based human security of the West African Region in light of worsening ecological pressures through providing regional contributions to the larger conversation on climate security in the region.*

Keywords: Climate Induced Migration, Human Security, Sahel, Nigeria.

I. INTRODUCTION

Climate-induced migration has been an abrupt development as one of the forces that have made the issue of insecurity in ecologically vulnerable areas such burning issue as it is in the Sahelian states or rather in the states of Nigerian concern in particular. The investigation article examines the interrelationship between human security and ecological displacement between the years 2020 and 2025 where variable climatic settings like desertification, lack of rain, and scarceness of resources have caused migratory population trends to propagate intercommunal violence, weakening of the state as well as disintegration of social solidarity. The qualitative and case study based on the human security perspective of this analysis employs the interviews with the displaced individuals, community leaders, and the government administration of the top Sahelian states including Borno, Yobe, Zamfara, and Katsina. Besides the cause and effects of climate induced migration, the paper looks at how the Nigerian state has responded in mitigating the effects which are humanitarian assistance, climate adaptations measures and security activities. Findings suggest that climate-related migration is not a direct cause of conflict, but an important factor that causes conflict in weak-governed areas and countries living in poverty and as well as inequities of the past. Also, there has been a very fragmented, reactive, and under-funded response by States and the lack of a coordinated system which integrates adaptation to climate change, conflict prevention and people development. The paper suggests a different solution of replacing traditional approaches to security with the strategy of people involvement with the emphasis on resilience construction, inclusive governance, and ecological justice. Reflectively, the paper academically and policy wise suggests on how the Nigerian and West African governments can resolve climate-based human security facing the West African Region with deteriorating ecological pressures by presenting regional inputs into the bigger discourse of climate security in the region.

Conceptually, the study fits into the field of climate-security discourse yet places both the concepts of environmental migration and political ecology into it. It also disrupts the reductionist accounts, which present climate change a natural cause of



violence, focusing on the quality of governance, resources, historical grievances, and socio-political institutions to influence the impact of climate change (Ide, 2021). Methodologically, it uses a qualitative case study method, by relying on the interview of displaced persons, state officials, security actors, and community leaders, as well as documentary and secondary data. Such triangulation is useful in analyzing causality, perception, and policy frames, which are critical in explaining the micro- and macro-level dynamics features. This paper presents valuable observations regarding migration, insecurity and governance in the Sahel of Nigeria based in the African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy (2022 2032) and the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF). In the final analysis the aim is to contribute to academic understanding and hence more encompassing context sensitive reaction to one of contemporary human security dilemmas that highlights the most.

A. Research Questions

This study is guided by the following overarching and thematic research questions:

- What are the key environmental drivers and patterns of climate-induced migration in Nigeria's Sahelian region?
- How does this migration contribute to, or interact with, local conflict dynamics and resource-based tensions?
- In what ways has the Nigerian government conceptualized and addressed climate-induced displacement in its security and development strategies?
- How effective are current state-led responses in mitigating the human security impacts of climate-induced migration?
- What policy alternatives can be proposed for a more integrated and human-centered response to climate-induced migration in Nigeria?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section critically interacts with the literature that has been done on the topic of climate change-migration-human security-conflict in relation to the Sahelian region of Nigeria. The review will be organized in a three-dimensional structure where it will be considered: (1) climate migration nexus, (2) environmental stress and conflict dynamics, (3) the human security framework, and (4) state and institutional responses to environmental displacement. It locates conceptual discussions, empirical results, theoretical gaps, and emerging patterns, and all of them help determine the base of contributions to this study.

A. Climate Change and Human Mobility in The Global South

The problem of climate-induced migration is gaining momentum as one of the cardinal issues of the Global South whose poor adaptation abilities and reliance on natural resources make societies particularly susceptible to climate change (Black et al., 2011). In this regard, migration is connected not only with abrupt climatic phenomena like floods, droughts, but also with gradual processes, such as the land degradation, desertification, and ecosystem collapsing (Rigaud et al., 2018). Although Tacoli (2009) suggests that environmental migration is an adaptation to disturbances, some scholars warn that it may lead to destabilization of the already fragile political zones, in case of a movement of people (Reuveny, 2007). Sahel is one of the most climate-vulnerable regions in a sub-Saharan Africa, and the average temperature is increasing 1.5 more than the global average (IPCC, 2021). Turning rainfall patterns and diminishing soil quality have led to augmented rural-agricultural slush, in addition to north-south outlined in empirical research on migration among pastoralists or the agrarian people (van der Land et al., 2023). Nevertheless, little research is available to associate these movements with the general discussion of human security and state fragility in West African countries such as Nigeria.

B. Climate Change and Conflict Dynamics in the Sahel

This idea that climate change is a so-called threat multiplier in fragile states has been introduced to the scholarly and policy space (Rüttinger et al., 2015). Environmental degradation has contributed to existing resource-based tensions between herders and farmers in the Sahel region of Nigeria and has also contributed to the emergence of violent extremist groups especially in the northeast (Okpara et al., 2016). In this regard, migration turns out to be a source of conflict as it causes land possession claims, ethnicized grievances, and political manipulation (Ide, 2021). Nonetheless, climate change causally linked to violence is not linear, or deterministic. According to empirical research, it is possible to highlight the role of mediating variables, i.e. the quality of governance, access to justice, institutional strength, and socio-economic inequality (Adams et al., 2018). As an example, Benjaminsen and Ba (2021) explain that so-called conflicts caused by the climate stress should be evaluated through the prism of ineffective land governance, militarized answers, and ethnic politics. Therefore, one of the likely problems with viewing climate-induced migration as a cause of violence is simplistic and policy-misdirecting.

C. Human Security and Environmental Displacement

Human security framework provides the comprehensive way of assessing the danger of climate-induced migration. Human security was first defined in 1994 through UNDP Human Development Report, and this involves the absence of fear,

want and indignity (UNDP, 1994). This has been extended by scholars with climate vulnerability and displacement being added to the list of insecurity and there is need to go beyond state-side security models (Barnett & Adger, 2007; Bettini, 2013). In Nigerian context, the realm of environmental displacement results in the spectrum of human insecurities such as loss of livelihoods, food insecurity, insufficient shelter, the disruptions of the social networks, and being subjected to violence (Ayuba & Omeje, 2021). Though humanitarian interventions have aimed to cover short-term requirements, the longer-range issues of dignity and social inclusion and structural disparity had pursued fine implications. Very few studies have considered how human security can be used as an analytical approach and as a normative framework towards designing integrated response to mobility created by climatic conditions.

D. Governance and State Response to Climate-Induced Migration

The state in Nigeria has reacted in an isolated form to environmental displacement and this has been mostly reactive. The current policies which include the National Adaptation Strategy and Plan of Action on Climate Change for Nigeria (NASPA-CCN) focus on resiliency and early warning system, and they frequently fail to integrate with other policies on migration management and conflict prevention policies (NEST, 2020). In addition, state reactions are often security-oriented and focus more on military engagements and guarding of borders instead of prevention, land reforms, or diversification of livelihoods (Ukeje & Mvukiyehe, 2022). Researchers have observed that inability to coordinate the efforts among the federal, state and local government erodes the quality of these policies (Abdulkadir et al., 2023). In addition, the existing empirical literature on the socio-political impacts of such responses especially in ways in which communities of concern perceive them or influence them to strengthen or weaken existing structural vulnerabilities is scant. The proposed research aims to fill that gap by interrogating both the normative and practical aspects of state-centred interventions to the Sahelian states of Nigeria between 2020 and 2025.

E. Theoretical Gaps and Emerging Debates

The literature is contradictory on the best way to theorize the connection between climate-induced migration and conflict and human security. Some have a structuralist approach which focuses more on macro forces, including but not limited to environmental determinism, demographic pressure, and others, whereas others have a constructivist or critical approach with a focus on political ecology, governance, and discourse (Hartmann, 2010; Selby & Hoffmann, 2014). Very limited works attempt to combine these methods in an organized manner to indicate how these differences occur regionally in the results of the conflicts or the policy responses in Nigeria. Further, climate security studies should be revised based on grounded, context-sensitive, and multi-actor approaches that consider modes of indigenous response, informal institutions, and cross-border relationships. This paper strives to provide a conceptual contribution by giving a new understanding of climate forced migration in terms of security and complexity of governance, and a multidimensional approach that is free of deterministic or reductionism interpretation. The literature points out that though climate-inducing migration is not a deterministic source of conflict, but it has the capacity to compound the tension, which is mediated by poor governance, institutional failure, and social-economic vulnerabilities. It is necessary to develop conceptual models integrating the issues of human security, environmental governance and migration management that facilitate the understanding of the security conditions in the Nigeria Sahel. This paper can be viewed as a part of that academic discourse and policy discussion that has been achieved by observing the climate migration security nexus with the help of the contextualized and human-centered perspective which is based on both, empirical facts and theoretical soundness.

F. The Human Security Paradigm

It was formally adopted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Human Development Report in 1994 which rediscovered the concept of security away as a state-based singular and militaristic perspective to a people-based multi-dimensional perspective. It highlights the idea of the absence of fear, absence of want and absence of indignity (UNDP, 1994). Contrary to conventional security systems that paid attention to territorial security, human security focuses on the security of individuals and communities in seven dimensions, including economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security. Application to the Study.

This model is particularly relevant in cases where climate-migration presents challenges to livelihoods accessibility, increases social conflicts, and undermines community resiliencies. It provides a normative and analytical framework on how environmental degradation forms to human insecurity especially in form of:

- Involuntary migration Resource conflict
- Water and food shortage
- Collapse in the social security nets

- Overlook by the state or repression by the state

The method of human security, applied in West Africa in the Sahel region of Nigeria, contributes to changing the perspective of addressing environmental changes by focusing on militarized responses by the states towards more coordinated, developmental-based and rights-based solutions (Ayuba & Omeje, 2021; Ukeje & Mvukiyehe, 2022). To make the study credible and objective, it was augmented with the theory of political ecology

G. Political Ecology

Political Ecology is a highly critical theoretical approach which looks into correlation between the political, economic and social elements and the environmental matters and reconstructions. It also criticizes apolitical, or techno-managerial explanations of environmental destruction, presenting it in terms of power, inequality and historical marginalization (Blaikie & Brookfield, 1987; Robbins, 2012). Political ecology in this study is utilized in order to comprehend: Who has the control of land and water? How has vulnerability and the pattern of migrations been historically framed by the state policy? How do ethnic, class or regional differences contribute to the experience of the exposure to environmental risk? The assessment of response through political ecology allows critiquing the actions of the state that only depend on either securitization or infrastructural intervention without focusing on the political economy of the climate being vulnerable. It reveals how unequal distribution of power and exclusionary development might make adaptive migration a conflict generator, especially when the displaced populations become criminalized, or local populations feel threatened in economic and cultural regards courtesy of influx migrants.

H. Theoretical Synthesis and Assumptions

The study takes dual perspective by adopting both Human Security and Political Ecology: Human security offers normative and right-based perspective through which the risks of climate change-induced migration to individual and community well-being can be examined. Political ecology presents a structural and critical model which asks questions of the socio-political origins of vulnerability, marginalization and maladaptive responses of the state. Cumulatively, the frameworks will enable the research:

- Not to rely on environmental determinism and instead focus on the human agency and institutional mediation. Consider the immediate (drought, flooding) as well as the root (land policy, governance failure) causes of displacement and of conflict.
- To review both the impacts of migration and the reaction of the state as well as the local actors and the displaced communities themselves.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research paper employs qualitative, exploratory research but is based on constructivist research paradigm to gain insight into the impact of climate-induced migration on human security and conflict issues in Nigeria Sahel between 2020 and 2025. It employs a case study by learning about and focusing on four Sahelian states, namely Borno, Yobe, Zamfara, and Katsina, which had been chosen because of their intense exposure to climate stress and displacement. This will be done by use of semi-structured interviews of key informants involved such displaced persons, local leader, security officers and government officials, as well as documentary research on policy reports, databases on conflicts, and environmental assessment. Thematic analysis has also been used in the study by grouping similarities and meaning drawing on the frameworks of human security and political ecology. Informed consent will be made sure that all those who participate in the research will be taking part voluntarily and that the research will also have ethical approval, and as much as possible the research will ensure that their anonymity is guaranteed, that cultures are respected, and that data will be secure.

IV. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The empirical data collected in the present research are based on in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and examination of government and NGO reports in four Sahelian states Borno, Yobe, Zamfara, and Katsina during the period of 2020-2025. The results are discussed within five main themes that were revealed in the field data analysis and the analysis of documents.

A. Climate Stress as a cause of Displacement

In all case sites, the respondents cited adverse environmental conditions due to climatic change particularly long droughts, desertification, and a drop in agricultural production as a key push factor towards migration. Farmers complained of leaving their ancestral lands because of the decline of rainfall and soil fertility whereas pastoralists emphasized on rising cases of

migration in search of grazing fields. In Zamfara and Katsina, the two categories attributed changes in the environment to increased rural urban migration and seasonal mobility, especially among the youth and pastoralists.

B. Competition of Resources and Increasing Levels of Intergroup Tensions

Such continuous process of migration has been as a result of environmental shocks that have aggravated the tension between migrants and host societies, especially in the border or peri-urban regions. In Katsina and Zamfara, the causes of violence according to the respondents were as a result of conflicts between the pastoralists and farmers on the farmlands and water sources. The Borno interviewees added that the migrants escaped to desertified northern areas, which the established populations of IDPs resent as they compete over limited humanitarian aids.

C. Disjointed and Reactive Responses in the State

The state responses to climate-induced displacement have been mostly reactive, security-driven and disjointed. Understanding the institutional synergy among the security agencies, environmental agencies and humanitarian responders was lacking as indicated by the officials of the State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs). In Borno and Yobe where the response has been militarised by the Boko Haram insurgency, most interviewees did not report much government involvement in considerations of the ecological causes of displacement or even in the long-term re-establishment of livelihoods.

D. Violations of Human Security and Collapses in Livelihoods

The displaced persons and the migrants gave priority to several manifests of insecurity on repeated occasions, such as food insecurity, lack of proper shelter, poor healthcare, and exposure to gender-based violence. Youth and women were found to be disproportionately affected to survive through informal or other forms of exploitative labour in every state. Respondents in Yobe and Borno (where displacement camps are overcrowded) revealed concerns that they could be used as criminals and that they do not have access to social amenities. Such observations serve to strengthen the claim that environmental displacement does not only lead to the experience of physical insecurity but much more economic and social vulnerability as well.

E. State Legitimacy and Gap in Resilience Perceptions

There is a further crisis of trust between the populations hit and the Nigerian state as depicted by interviews. Respondents at Zamfara and Katsina criticized the state governments because they did not foresee or avert the conflicts that were caused by the migratory pressures. Local leaders stressed on the importance of embrative discourse, land reforms, and conflict-sensitive planning of development. Local efforts meant efforts such as early warning systems and traditional peace committees that were hailed to be successful in reducing tensions although they were still locally based and lacking resources.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study has validated the multi and inter-causal association between climate induced migration and human security issues in Sahel region in Nigeria. This study examines the evidence of four states bordering the frontline Borno, Yobe, Zamfara, and Katsina states to identify living conditions of environmentally displaced populations and state inadequacies to respond structurally to environmental changes. The presentation provides a critique and normative explanation to the nature of discussion framed around human security and politics ecology.

A. Climate Change as a Driver, Not a Source of War

This paper proves that climate-caused migration does not automatically result in conflicts per se but heightens pre-existing social, economic, and political conflicts. As expected, according to Ide (2021) and Benjaminsen & Ba (2021), the findings show the presence of climate variability as a stressor interacting with the presence of unresolved land tenure conflict, poor conflict resolution machinery, and history of grievance. To illustrate, rivalry over the degraded land and rivers between the pastoralists and the farmers in Zamfara and Katsina was reported to have been a major cause of local violence- not necessarily given the lack of availability of environmental resources but owing to the fact that there were no equity in land governance systems.

a) Poor and Securitized State Responses

Although the relationship between the environmental degradation and forced mobility are apparent, Nigerian government has been pursuing predominantly reactive, short- and militarized policies especially in Borno and Yobe states where security forces occupy the entire policy space. This result aligns with Ukeje and Mvukiyehe (2022), which claims that the lack of climate- and human development as a combination with the strategy of securitization results in the fragmentation of policies. According to the interview data, the responsibilities of the agencies that have to do with environmental management and humanitarian coordination usually work in silos, undermining adaptive capacity and legitimacy of the state.

b) Multi-Dimensional Human Insecurity

The results leave little doubt that the human security interpretation of the climate-induced migration results in the conflation of insecurities, economic, environmental, and health-related, as well as personal. All the study locations reported food insecurity, poverty caused by displacement, inaccessible services, and greater exposure to violence, particularly women and young people mentioned by respondents. Such situations highlight the shortcomings of the traditional state security efforts which only emphasize on limiting mobility without paying attention to the overall welfare and dignity of the displaced community (Barnett & Adger, 2007).

c) Failure of Governance and State Legitimacy Destruction

Several participants talked again and again about frustration with the lack of inclusive mechanisms of governance and effective policy participation. The literature shows that, in the case of institutions, the separation of power possessing issues of maintenance, poor early warning systems, and limitations with regards to land-reform laws have left a vacuum that, according to the literature, is usually filled with informal players, or radical organizations (Abdulkadir et al., 2023). Inability of state institutions to be proactive in their responses has eroded the trust in the government and outcomes social cohesion that directly goes against the principles of human security which is based on state responsibility towards protecting and empowering vulnerable groups.

d) Local Resilience and Living Coping Mechanisms

Interestingly, the paper also reveals that there is a localised evidence of resilience strategies. Traditional leaders, women groups, and youth organizations in many communities have been proactive in settling the scores, distributing the resources and involving the displaced persons. These projects are consonant with the bottom-up elements promoted by political ecology where local agency is regarded as crucial to resist structural violence as well as insecurity dampening. Nonetheless, such initiatives cannot carry much weight until they are measured by the state, supported technically or affirmed by law.

e) Conceptual Contribution and Synthesis

Using the approach of human security paradigm in partnership with political ecology, the analysis also questions linear or deterministic models of climate conflicts relations. It demonstrates that migration is a highly political event more than the reaction to deteriorating environment because it is affected by the failures of governance, exclusion, and access to power and resources issues. Such a combined framework not only addresses a knowledge gap in the current literature but also makes a step toward a more people- and context-sensitive vision of the nexus between climate change and migration security in the Sahel of Nigeria.

B. Implications for Policy and Scholarship

There are a number of implications to the findings:

- It is high time to end militarized policy on climate-security and follow developmental and inclusive approach to adaptation.
- Land tenure, fair rule on the resource, and decentralized early warning systems should be thoroughly addressed so as to secure the migration-initiated conflict.
- Academic research should also continue to go beyond the basic climate-conflict paradigm and focus on more interdisciplinary approaches and frameworks that take into consideration the experiences of the people on the ground.

C. Conclusion

This paper has examined the nuance between the climate migration and human security in the Sahelian states of Nigeria in the period between 2020 and 2025, especially in regards to the intersections of environmental stresses, conflicts and state action that leads to human resilience and vulnerability. Based on a qualitative case study of four states conflict-affected Borno, Yobe, Zamfara, and Katsina, the study has found that climate change is not a determinant of conflict, but a threat multiplier that exacerbates already weak governance capabilities, livelihood vulnerabilities and socio-political pressures. By means of synergetic perspectives of the human security paradigm and political ecology, the research proves that environmental degradation-induced migration also pays the role of intercommunal tensions, especially when land and water use rivalry are not regulated and when the state does not have credible and synchronized answers.

It has, further, demonstrated that existing state responses are reactive, securitized and out of touch with the reality on the ground of affected populations hence prompting resilience and creating cycles of displacement and violence. The study establishes that population displacements encounter multidimensional insecurities, that is, besides physical insecurity, the

population faces are exposed to economic exclusion, food insecurity, gender-specific vulnerability, and social exclusion. These types of insecurity are the reflection of the more general inability of the state structures to inject people-oriented, rights-based, and accommodative adaptation policies into the context of climate change and conflict response.

To deal with the climate induced migration of Nigeria and the threats that this poses on security especially in the Sahel, there is need to change the paradigm: shift militarized containment to preventive, participatory, developmental governance. It takes an attitude that requires us to acknowledge migration not only as a challenge to overcome, but rather as an outcome of systematic inequalities at the structural level and environmental injustices. This study contextualizes environmental migration in the larger frameworks of human security and political control and brings out a conceptual and empirical source of more integrated, situation-specific, and sustainable policy responses. It is also the part of continuous academic discussions because it opposes the determinism of climate change and leads to comprehensive, inflated approaches to one of the most dangerous problems of human security in the modern human world.

D. Recommendations

- The government should take a conscious effort on human security development agenda than emphasis on the state security.
- The climate induced is not the real source of conflict but the problem of weak governance and failed institution particularly in Sahelian of Nigeria. therefore, the government institution should be ready to leave to the task of responding to the people problem and be accountable to the people in villages or rural areas of the country.
- There is need for people to understand the part of peace and aim toward cooperation than promoting ethnicity consciousness. Like wise the farmer-herdsmen conflict should be total resolved by the community leaders, and government at the local, state, and national level.
- 4 There should be political will and genuine desire to fix the country by the government and project substantive development that can guarantee human security in Nigeria, in particular Borno, Zamafra, Yobe, Kastina.

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