



FUDMA International Journal of Social Sciences (FUDIJOSS)

Vol. 4, No. 1 June, 2024

ISSN: 2735-9522 (Print) ISSN :2735-9530 (Online)



FUDMA  
International  
Journal of  
Social Sciences  
(FUDIJOSS),  
Volume 4, No. 1, June, 2024

**A Publication  
of The Faculty of Social  
Sciences, Federal University  
Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State,  
Nigeria**

**ISSN:** 2735-9522 (Print)  
2735-9530 (Online)



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Publication fee is ₦ 30,000 or 150 (USD).

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Two issues of FUDIJOSS would be published per year, in June and December, by the Faculty of Social Sciences, Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State, Nigeria.

**Annual subscriptions (2023):** Nigeria, ₦10,000 (Individuals) ₦15,000 (Institutions). Outside, 35 (USD) (Individuals); 100 (USD) (Institutions).

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## POLITICAL INCLUSION IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS AMONG INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs) IN ABUJA: AN INSIGHT FROM THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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### ABSTRACT

*Democracy relies on the active participation and representation of all individuals within the democratic system. Fundamental to this is the notion of political inclusion. Therefore, the principle that every individual, irrespective of social class, age, gender, cultural background, or ethnic and religious affiliations, should possess equal rights and opportunities to participate and contribute to the operation of these systems and procedures. Considering this, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who are compelled to leave their habitual residences have a legitimate entitlement to influence decisions impacting their lives through engagement in electoral processes. This universality is not consistently observed on a global scale, including Nigeria. IDPs encounter various challenges hindering their exercise of the right to political engagement. However, the aspect of political participation for IDPs remains unexplored subsequent to the 2023 General elections in Abuja, Nigeria. The disenfranchisement of IDPs not only violates their rights but may also worsen the social, political, and economic marginalization they endure. Consequently, this study investigates the political inclusion in the democratic process concerning IDPs in Abuja during the 2023 General elections. The study utilized primary and secondary data sources and simple descriptive statistics was used in analyzing the data. The paper found out that majority of the IDPs were able to complete their registration process and change their polling locations. Using the democratic theory that views universal suffrage and representative electoral mechanisms as essential components of any contemporary democratic model, the study recommends for the implementation of strategies that motivate IDPs to enroll, participate in voting, and aspire for political positions in their existing residential constituencies. This will promote participation, integration, and ultimately enhance the democratic quality.*

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**Keywords:** IDPs; Political inclusion; Political participation; Democracy; Election

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### Introduction

In recent times, democracy is regarded as the most popular and perhaps the best form of government that addresses the challenges of heterogeneity and also provides a framework for socio-economic development. This informs the reason why most countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America have joined the democratic bandwagon. Democracy as a process involves building up of institutions that would ensure good governance and sustain its values, norms and principal traditions. It is a form of government that originated and owes its foundations to the ancient Greek city-states where the people gathered to take collective decisions associated with public issues. Hence, Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy as 'government of the people, by the people and for the people' derives its perspectives from the classical notion of democracy. This definition gives us the idea that all the people in the polity are direct participants in the conduct of public affairs, whereas in actuality even in the Greek city-states where direct participation of the people (demos)





was possible in the political community (polis), there were overt cases of exclusion of certain categories of people in that art of governance (Njoku, 2018). In line with this, Hornblower (1993) cited in Jega (2007) noted that:

“The Athenian democracy was one of the most participatory of all times.....if one focuses on the powers and privileges of those who were included in its operations. But the total of those excluded was large.....slaves, women, subjectsallies in the two periods of naval hegemony, metic.....there were degrees of exclusion and exceptions were made for occasional privileged groups” .

This suggests that despite the fact that majority of the people were represented directly in the democracy of the Greek city-states, there was still a significant section of the society that was excluded from the management of governmental matters. These were the slaves, women, and children. However, the practice of democracy in modern states has become impracticable for all the people to come together as an assembly and represent themselves directly as was obtainable in the Greek city-states, hence democracy has transitioned from its classical form to take the form of representative democracy. In this case, people are expected to elect a few persons to represent them in government. This, therefore, necessitates political participation in the forms of voting during elections as well as contesting for elective positions.

In recent times, there has been a prevailing opinion among scholars of politics that democracy remains an incomplete endeavor, not solely concerning the proliferation of liberal democratic structures in various regions worldwide, but also regarding the enhancement of democratic qualities within all communities. This objective could be realized through the gradual inclusion of different groups and categories of people in the political life of their state. As noted by Philips (1995), while the struggle for universal adult citizenship rights is largely concluded in developed democracies, the focus of scholars and activists has shifted towards enhancing the substantive nature and efficacy of democracy by striving for greater inclusion of marginalized groups and categories that continue to face exclusion or oppression despite the formal assurance of democratic equality. The groups targeted for such inclusion include ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous populations, women, the elderly, youth, the jobless, and the socioeconomically disadvantaged. Additionally, recent migrants, individuals vulnerable to environmental hazards, and forthcoming generations are also highlighted (Dryzek,1996).

In light of this, internally displaced persons (IDPs) hold rightful claim to the complete range of rights accorded to other residents within the nation, including the entitlement to engage in state governance and public affairs. Consequently, the principle of universal suffrage and equal voting rights ensures that every eligible individual can freely exercise their voting privilege without encountering any discrimination, a right that extends to internally displaced persons. However, the political participation of IDPs, despite being a fundamental entitlement under international law, has encountered a number of political and practical obstacles over time, often resulting in their disenfranchisement and marginalization from the political sphere and public discourse. This disenfranchisement not only violates their rights but also significantly contributes to perpetuating their social, political, and economic isolation. Such challenges may encompass issues of insecurity, conflict, restricted access to polling stations, information deficits, identification challenges, and the loss or destruction of legal documents. Moreover, even when IDPs manage to cast their votes, they remain susceptible to coercion to support specific candidates or ruling factions in exchange for safeguarding their well-being.





The inclusion of the IDPs in the political process is very necessary as their exclusion constitutes a relegation of an important as well as a necessary route to engagement, reintegration, reconciliation, and advancing their welfare by giving them a voice in government and decisions affecting them. It is against this background that this paper investigates the political inclusion of the IDPs in the democratic process with specific emphasis on Durumi IDP camp in Abuja during the 2023 General elections. The paper is divided into Five (5) sections, namely: the Introduction, Literature Review and Theoretical Framework, Methodology, Results and Discussion, and Conclusion

## Literature Review

Over the years, persistent social, economic and environmental pressures are causing more people to leave their homes and livelihoods, seeking refuge in safer locations, on a temporary or long-term basis. Historically, the global crisis of internal displacement emerged on the global agenda in the late 1980s resulting from violent conflicts, internal strife, systematic violations and natural factors (Cohen, 2004). The World experienced the highest ever rate of migration since the beginning of the 21st century, tagged “century of people on the move” by the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees, António Guterres in 2011 (United Nations General Assembly, 2011). By the end of 2017, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC, 2018) put the total global internal displacement head count at 40 million with 30.6 million new displacements. While these displacements are both conflict and disaster related, they also spread across 143 countries and territories. Out of 30.6 million new human displacements, 11.8 million people were displaced by violent conflicts while 18.8 million other displacements were linked to natural disasters. The regions affected by disasters include: Africa, Asia, Americas and Europe with Sub-Saharan Africa leading in violent conflict related displacements (IDMC, 2018).

In Nigeria, internal displacement is as a result of a multitude of complex and often overlapping drivers and triggers, such as recurring floods and protracted violence. Nigeria has witnessed disasters resulting from Boko Haram insurgency, flood, fire outbreak, building collapse, plane crash, road mishaps, unrest, armed banditry, militancy, communal conflicts and agitations among others (Ezenyilimba, Maduagwu & Eze, 2018). Likewise, the alarming rate of insecurity in Nigeria, especially in the northern region of the country has increased the crime rate and terrorist attacks leaving people in the north in helpless situations. Boko Haram insurgencies in Nigeria’s north east region has also contributed to the growing number of population displacement in the country, which is generally believed to be as a result of government’s negligence in providing social needs of citizens (Abdulrahman & Zuwaira, 2016).

According to Egwu (2011), the full scope of displacement is not well known in Nigeria. He argued based on the capacity and resource of accurate data from the complex nature of the IPDs. Consequently, the report of the IDMC (2012) showed that there had not been an actual survey on displacement and no mechanism to monitor for a durable solution. However, the IDMC (2022) report indicated that most internal displacements in 2022 were associated with disasters, as the worst floods in a decade hit the country between June and November. The floods triggered over 2.4 million displacements, the highest disaster displacement figure in sub-Saharan Africa in 2022. Half of the displacements were reported in Bayelsa State, Anambra and Kogi States. Floods also affected IDP camps in Borno State, forcing thousands of people already displaced by conflict and violence to flee again. The floods limited humanitarian access by damaging roads, bridges, and infrastructure.



The state of Zamfara, in the north-west, recorded the highest displacement figure in the country, reaching 48,000 movements. While another 50,000 displacements occurred in the north-western states of Kaduna and Katsina, and the north-central state of Benue. Which were majorly triggered by attacks from criminal groups or as a result of clashes between farmers and pastoralists (<https://www.internal-displacement>). It is important to mention that political participation is situated at the core of modern democracy, thereby conferring legitimacy upon governments. The right to engage in public and political life on an equitable basis is a fundamental aspect of the notion of inclusive democracy. The effective involvement of all individuals and groups in political and public matters is fundamental for the realization of human rights and constitutes a central element of rights-based strategies aimed at eliminating discrimination and inequalities (A/HRC/13/23). This is stated in the International and National Legal Framework for Political Participation

The extent to which political participation is recognized as a fundamental human right can easily be determined by the extent to which it is recognized and secured by legal frameworks. The entitlement to political participation is enshrined in the global human rights instrument - the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent human rights instruments. Nevertheless, the precise scope of this entitlement varies across the diverse legal documents embodying it. This divergence might be linked to the lack of consensus on the concept of political participation itself and the extent to which global, regional, or national communities view it as a right that necessitates legal protection. Specific international human rights instruments containing provisions on political participation comprise:

Article 21 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights which states,

- (1) Everyone has the right to participate in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
- (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) provides that,

Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in Article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions:

- (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;
- (b) To vote and be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;
- (c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

Similarly, Regional human rights instruments also highlight the importance of political participation, as outlined in the ICCPR. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) asserts in Article 13 the entitlement of every citizen to engage in the



governance of their country, either directly or through elected representatives as stipulated by the law, along with the right to equal access to public service. Moreover, citizens engage directly in public affairs without undue limitations, necessitating states to implement effective measures that guarantee all eligible voters can freely exercise their voting rights. Registration processes, if mandated, should be made convenient, removing any barriers to registration, including residence requirements that may unfairly exclude the homeless. Voter education and registration campaigns are also crucial. Elections must be conducted regularly and fairly, within a legal framework that enables the full exercise of voting rights, ensuring no hindrance to the expression of the people's will, with results being duly recognized and enforced.

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) recognizes political participation as a fundamental objective and directive principle in Chapter II. It establishes in Section 14(2)(a) that 'sovereignty rests with the people of Nigeria, from whom the government derives all power and authority through the Constitution.' Furthermore, Section 14(2)(c) mandates that people's participation in governance must align with constitutional provisions.' This underscores the Nigerian populace's entitlement to engage in governance. The Constitution also stipulates that every Nigerian citizen aged eighteen and above, residing in the country, has the right to vote. Additionally, there are constitutional requirements for eligibility for various public offices and factors that may disqualify individuals. Similarly, Section 78 of the Constitution entrusts the Independent National Electoral Commission with overseeing voter registration and election procedures. The Constitution guarantees freedom from discrimination, freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression, and freedom of movement, all of which are essential for realizing political participation rights. The Electoral Act contains detailed guidelines on how voting rights are exercised through elections, with the right to vote being a fundamental aspect of political participation in Nigeria.

Equally, internally displaced persons (IDPs) retain the entitlement to all rights enjoyed by other individuals in the nation, including the right to participate in governmental and public matters. The United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, a compilation of international standards found in existing human rights agreements and humanitarian law, offers guidance to states and organizations involved in aiding and safeguarding internally displaced persons, ensuring equality as outlined in Principle 1.

“Internally displaced persons are to be treated equally, enjoying the same rights and liberties under both international and domestic law as any other individual in the country, without prejudice due to their displacement status.”

Furthermore, Principle 20(2) mandates authorities to furnish internally displaced persons with all necessary documentation for exercising their legal rights, facilitating the issuance of new or replacement documents without imposing unreasonable conditions, such as mandating a return to their original place of residence. Principle 22(1)(d) explicitly addresses the political rights of internally displaced persons, emphasizing that they should not face discrimination in voting or participating in governmental and public affairs, regardless of whether they reside in camps or elsewhere. Additionally, Principle 29(1) stipulates that internally displaced persons who have returned home or settled in a different region should have the right to full participation in public affairs and equal access to public services. The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons, adopted on 23 October 2009 and enforced on 6 December 2012, reflects the African regional approach to managing internal displacement. Nigeria ratified this convention on 17 April 2012. Article 9(1)(a) of the convention requires state parties to



prevent discrimination against internally displaced persons in the enjoyment of their rights solely on the grounds of their displacement status. Additionally, state parties must implement measures to ensure that internally displaced persons who are citizens of the country can exercise their civic and political rights, including public participation, voting rights, and eligibility for public office.

Article 11(2) of the Kampala Convention reflects Principle 15(d) of the Guiding Principles which safeguards the right to voluntary return to previous habitual residences, indicating that internally displaced persons should not be compelled to return to their former abodes for voting or accessing any other entitlement. Nigeria adopted a National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons in August 2012, resembling the Guiding Principles of 1998 and the Kampala Convention. Similarly, internally displaced persons, like other Nigerian nationals, are entitled to recognition, safeguarding, and realization of all entitlements enshrined in the Constitution, domesticated sub-regional, regional, and international human rights and humanitarian instruments. The fundamental principle of highlighting the entitlements of internally displaced persons concerning non-discrimination is enshrined in Section 42 of the Constitution. Consequently, internally displaced persons should be treated equally to other Nigerian citizens, even necessitating additional measures to ensure their treatment is the same as other Nigerians, particularly concerning their right to political engagement. Correspondingly, the Electoral Act asserts in Section 12 (1) that an individual is eligible for voter registration if they are a Nigerian citizen aged 18 years or above; are habitually resident, employed in, hail from the Local Government Area Council or Ward covered by the registration center; present themselves to the Commission's registration officers and are not under any legal impediment. Section 13 further specifies that an individual residing in a different constituency before the election from where they are registered may apply to the Electoral Commissioner of the State they currently reside in to have their name listed on the transferred voters register for that constituency. Such a request must be supported by the applicant's voter's card and should be submitted no less than 30 days before an election in the constituency of residence.

Similarly, the Revised 2022 INEC Regulations for voting by IDPs provides in its preamble that 'pursuant to the powers conferred in the INEC (herewith referred to as the Commission) by Section 15(a)(1) of the Third Schedule of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended, Sections 24(1) and 47(1) and (2) of the Electoral Act 2022, and in conformity with International treaties and conventions on promoting inclusivity, the Commission hereby issues the following regulations for voting by IDPs, the regulations are issued as Independent National Electoral Commission Decision Extract No..... of .....2022.....

1.3 voting by persons with Disability and Vulnerable Persons: Polling locations in IDP camps/voting centers shall be located in places easily accessible to persons with disability, vulnerable persons, and those with special needs. Assistance will be provided to individuals at the polling place through the provision of appropriate communication methods and assistive voting devices and processes that are available.

Drnovsky (2016) in a study on 'Electoral Participation of Internally Displaced Persons IDPs in Ukraine' tried to examine the electoral participation of IDPs in Ukraine's elections in the view of relevant international standards. Using the single case study research design, the study analyzed the 2014 early presidential elections, 2014 early parliamentary elections and 2015 local elections in Ukraine in assessing IDP enfranchisement. The case study analysis revealed that IDP electoral participation was a problematic element of all three





elections that have been examined. Firstly, with regard to domestic legislation, incorporation of Ukraine's international commitments concerning electoral participation rights into the domestic legal framework was not an issue at any of the examined electoral processes. On the contrary, IDP voting rights were explicitly secured in the Ukrainian electoral legal framework only before local elections, while during presidential and parliamentary elections no such legal provision existed. On the other hand, there were always legal provisions in place facilitating access of IDPs to the electoral process. Nonetheless, these provisions addressed only a portion of all IDPs in Ukraine and were introduced very shortly before the elections. The short timelines negatively impacted the electoral process from the perspective of operational planning, namely with respect to the implementation of provisions and readiness of election administration. The lack of training of some electoral officers as well as insufficient equipment affected especially the presidential election. In general, in all examined electoral processes, operational planning suffered from the absence of a special national authority which would deal with IDP electoral participation. The study concluded that Ukraine mostly failed to fulfill its commitments since IDPs faced in all examined elections certain impediments that prevented them from voting.

Similarly, in a study carried out by Solomon (2009) titled 'Election-Related Rights and Political Participation of Internally Displaced Persons: Protection During and After Displacement in Georgia', the study attempted to raise awareness and understanding of issues of internal displacement in the context of organizing and conducting elections as well as the challenges faced by IDPs. It was discovered that displacement threatens virtually all of an individual's rights—economic, social, and cultural rights as well as their political and civil rights. Among which is election-related rights, such as the right to vote and to participate in public and political affairs. Even when the rights of IDPs are recognized by law, IDPs may face challenges in realizing these rights on account of other legal, administrative, and practical obstacles. These obstacles can arise in matters related to voter registration, voter education, and receiving and casting a ballot on Election Day. Other obstacles, such as those connected to counting of ballots cast by IDPs and campaigning as a candidate for election, can also stand in the way of IDPs and their election-related rights. In many situations of displacement, IDPs are unable or unwilling to return to the area where they previously registered to vote.

Also, the area of their origin may be under the control of groups who are not willing to hold elections or allow IDPs to return to vote. Unless provisions are included in the electoral framework to allow IDPs to register to vote in other constituencies, they will not be able to exercise the same political rights that other, non-displaced, citizens enjoy. Hence, the study recommends that Electoral frameworks should be drafted in a way to anticipate the need of IDPs to register and to vote in the constituency of their displacement or in another constituency where they may decide to resettle. Adenitan (2014) also conducted a study on 'Experiences of Internally Displaced Persons: A Case Study of Bama and Gwoza Durumi Abuja Nigeria'. The study adopts a mixed method to source for data in the analysis of the experiences of IDPs. The study generated primary data through qualitative interviews that gave an in-depth narrative on ground situation from the minds of interviewees. The secondary source of data was also used for this research that consisted of academic publications, research papers and policy documents. From the empirical fieldwork, the study discovered that the IDPs in Abuja Area one Durunmi camps, face the challenge of insufficient food, shelter, water, health and medical care, and sanitation. This is however not only as a result of the absence of state policy, but rather, by the irresponsible state; the state that withholds its assistance deliberately because it wants the IDPs moved away to

another place. That is, the IDPs are faced by “the politics of policy application.” The government pays little or no attention to this group of people and their plight. Measures taken to address the deplorable conditions in which they live are very, very inadequate, if any. In some cases, as scholars have observed, the activities of the government are the brains behind the causes of displacement. Social unrest, violence, and terrorism are caused by corrupt turgid political practices and a mindless approach to politics.

Since the IDPs are within the country, the government should - by international law and established principles - provide and assist them. That the responsibility of helping and assisting the internally displaced rests on the national authorities is a core concept reflected in Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which stipulates the rights of IDPs and the duties of the government towards them, and also is a central tenet guiding international and regional approaches to internal displacement. This study however in looking at the experiences of the IDPs did not investigate their political inclusion in the democratic process. Ikyase, Elyon & Shamaki (2022) writing on ‘Internally Displaced Persons and the 2019 General Elections in North Central Nigeria: A Study of Daudu Camp in Benue State’, examined the level of political participation of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the 2019 general elections in North Central Nigeria, with particular attention given to Daudu IDPs' Camp in Benue State. The paper was written against the backdrop that safeguarding the security of lives and property of Internally Displaced Persons is the responsibility of the government as they are also entitled to the same set of rights as non-displaced nationals including their right to political participation. While relying on primary and secondary data as the method of data collection, the paper argued that the participation of the IDPs in the 2019 General elections was impeded by various factors which to a large extent disenfranchised them from voting. Current experiences show that IDPs are under-participating in elections due to a lack of inclusive legal and policy frameworks, restrictive law governing residency, documentation requirements, amongst others. Amidst diverse but context-driven interventions initiated by different countries to guarantee their electoral rights, lack of effective inter-agency coordination and cooperation, targeted and sustained awareness creation programme, ability to reach political consensus, and a strong partnership with civil society organisation (CSOs), amongst others, rendered policy interventions less impactful.

The study submits that some of the challenges faced by Daudu IDPs camp in Guma local government area of Benue state during the 2019 general elections are: security, where over 9000 people left their homes to settle at the camp and this has affected them in exercising their voting right; destruction/misplacement of voters card, stating that in Daudu IDPs camp over 700 people lost their Permanent Voters Card (PVC) due to destruction or misplacement of their card and this affected them in participating in the 2019 general election; distance and low turnout in polling units where due to distance from their polling Units majority of the electorate were not able to travel to exercise their franchise. However, those who were willing to travel did not have the means to convey them to their various polling units and this affected their rights of participating in the 2019 election. In view of the literature reviewed, it is evident that several works have been carried out on IDPs with specific reference to the challenges faced in camp, and the role of government in providing basic amenities for them, few works have however been done on the political inclusion of IDPs in Nigeria, specifically none has been carried out in Durumi IDP camp, Abuja. Hence, this study bridge this gap in literature.





### **Theoretical Framework**

The paper employs the theory of democracy, focusing particularly on participatory democracy for an in-depth analysis. Democracy theory highlights universal suffrage and representative electoral procedures as fundamental prerequisites for modern democratic frameworks. Participatory democracy theory advocates for active citizen engagement in policymaking to promote the common good and enhance government accountability. Notable proponents of participatory democracy include Rousseau (1762), Mill (1861), and Macpherson (1975). Rousseau emphasized popular sovereignty, citizen involvement in state affairs, and the importance of governments fostering moral and intellectual qualities among citizens. Similarly, renowned Political Scientists such as McPherson and Pateman have significantly contributed to the advancement of participatory democracy concepts. During the 1960s, theorists of participatory democracy introduced a model emphasizing citizen engagement in collective decision-making on issues impacting their lives as a core moral value within contemporary democratic theory (Bachrach, 1975). They argue that as all social relationships contain political elements centered around authority structures, broadening and deepening participation and political equality are essential for democratizing societies.

Society is comprised of diverse political systems and the structure of authority, which impacts the psychological characteristics and attitudes of individuals it engages with. Hence, the cultivation of essential qualities in individuals for the functioning of a democratic society on a national scale can solely occur through the 'democratization of authority structures in all political systems' (Pateman, 1970). It is crucial, therefore, that individuals seize every available opportunity to engage actively (Gbikpi, 2005), where 'full participation' denotes a procedure in which 'every member of a decision-making entity possesses equal authority in determining decision outcomes' (Pateman, 1970).

Pateman argues that such participation boosts political efficacy, reduces feelings of alienation from centers of power, fosters a concern for communal issues, and contributes to shaping a citizenry that is engaged and well-informed, thus displaying an increased interest in governmental affairs. Correspondingly, Lynd (1965) suggests that participatory democracy seeks to realize two specific aims: the involvement of each individual in decisions that impact the quality and direction of their lives, and the structuring of society to uphold human independence while facilitating shared participation. Consequently, the participatory model can be seen as a blueprint for inclusive political and social frameworks, advocating for the involvement of all individuals to expand democratic nationality.

In the context of this study, this theory holds relevance in the electoral engagement of individuals internally displaced by natural calamities or man-made crises, as well as those displaced by conflicts and violence. Furthermore, the electoral involvement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is deemed vital for achieving lasting conflict resolution. Inclusive elections, therefore, establish a platform for genuine reconciliation and enduring peace, laying the groundwork for the establishment of strong democratic institutions in the long run. This underscores the inseparability of democracy and peace, indicating that the electoral participation of IDPs strengthens both processes.

### **Methodology**

This paper adopted the Case study design. The Case study involves an in-depth and thorough analysis of a singular case and focuses on the characteristics of the specific case under consideration. It is carried out in Durumi IDP camp, Abuja, Nigeria. There are



Four IDP camps in Abuja with some exclusively for displaced persons' and some among non-displaced persons' settlements (IDMC, 2019). However, the Durumi IDP camp was purposively chosen because it is an exclusively IDP settlement that hosts the highest number of IDPs (2,830) according to the camp leadership records accessed during preliminary visits. The study's population encompasses adult individuals (aged 18 years and older), both male and female, who are members of the camp and provided primary information regarding their perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs on the political participation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the context of the 2023 general elections. It employs a combination of primary and secondary data sources which included textbooks, journals, etc. By using the Yamane (1967) formula for determining sample size, 350 questionnaires were intentionally distributed, resulting in a return of 303 questionnaires that were utilized in the analysis. Furthermore, interviews were carried out with two (2) camp officials (the chairman and the women's leader) to compare opinions between the leadership and other camp members. Utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), the collected data was analyzed using simple descriptive analysis.

## Results and Discussions

Table 1: State of Origin of Respondents in Durumi IDP Camp

STATE	Frequency	Percent	Rank
Borno	80	26.4	1
Adamawa	49	16.2	2
Katsina	44	14.5	3
Kaduna	41	13.5	4
Plateau	31	10.2	5
Zamfara	27	8.9	6
Sokoto	12	4.0	7
Bauchi	6	2.0	8
Taraba	6	2.0	9
Jigawa	4	1.3	10
Gombe	1	.3	11
Nassarawa	1	.3	12
Yobe	1	.3	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: Fieldwork (2023).

Table 1 shows the state distribution of Internally Displaced Persons. 26.4% (80) of the respondents were from Borno state, 16.2% (49) from Adamawa state, 14.5% (44) from Katsina state, 13.5% (41) from Kaduna, 10.2% (31) from Plateau state, and 8.9% (27) from Zamfara state. Similarly, Sokoto state recorded 4% (12) Bauchi and Taraba states both had 2% (6) each and 1.3% (4) were from Jigawa state. Gombe, Nassarawa and Yobe states all recorded 0.3% (1) each. The results of this Table 1 indicate that majority of the IPDs at the Durumi IDP camp are from the North-Eastern states of Nigeria which have been the area most ravaged by insurgency.

Table 2 : Registered Voters in Durumi IDP Camp, Nigeria

Are you a registered voter	Frequency	Percent
Yes	265	87.5
No	38	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Fieldwork, (2023).

Table 2 indicated that a majority 87.5% (265) of the IDPs in the Durumi camp are registered voters in Nigeria while a minority 12.5% (38) indicated that they are not registered voters.

Table 3: Ability to Change Polling Unit

Were you able to change your polling unit location after displacement?	Frequency	Percent
Missing	1	.3
Yes	197	65.0
No	105	34.7
Total	303	100.0

Source: Fieldwork (2023).

Table 3 indicated that 65.0% (197) of the respondents were able to change their polling units after displacement while 34.7% (105) indicated that they were not able to register for a change of polling unit after their displacement. However, 0.3% (1) respondent did not respond to the question.

Table 4: Voting During the 2023 General Election in Durumi IDP Camp

Did you vote during the February 2023 Election?	Frequency	Percent
Missing	1	.3
Yes	167	55.1
No	135	44.6
Total	303	100.0

Source: Fieldwork (2023).

Table 4 provides data on those who voted during the 2023 elections and those who did not vote. A total of 167 respondents represented by 55.1% indicated that they voted during the February 2023 elections while 135 respondents represented by 44.6% did not vote during the elections. However, there was one missing entry represented by 0.3% respondent did not indicate whether he voted or not.

Table 5: Barriers to Political Inclusion in Durumi IDP Camp

S/No.	Barrier to political inclusion*	Frequency	Percentage
1	Lack of interest in the electoral process	73	27%
2	Inability to transfer my PVC to my new place of residence	50	19%

3	Lack of Voter Education	45	17%
4	Inability to collect my PVC after changing my Polling Unit	38	14%
5	The candidates were not my choice	26	10%
6	Threats of violence	18	7%
7	Insecurity at the Polling Unit	11	4%
8	Ill health	5	2%
9	Accessibility to my Polling Unit	2	1%
10	I traveled during the elections	1	0%
	Total	269	100%
	*Total (269) exceeds 135 people that did not vote due to multiple selections		

Source: Fieldwork (2023).

Table 5 provides the catalogue of the many barriers the internally displaced persons faced in the Durumi camp Abuja during the 2023 general elections. 27% (73) of the respondents indicated that lack of interest in the electoral process was responsible for their non-participation in the elections; 19% (50) were unable to transfer their PVCs to their new place of residence, 17% (45) were of the view that their lack of enlightenment in the voting process hindered them from participating. However, 14% (38) of the respondents were able to register at their new residence but unfortunately could not collect their PVCs. On the other hand, 10% (26) did not vote because the candidates who contested were not their choice candidates. Threats of violence and insecurity prevented 7% (18) and 4% (11) of the respondents respectively from voting, 2% (1) had the challenge of ill-health, 1% were not able to access their polling units and 1 person did not vote because he/she travelled during the elections.

Similarly, Table 6 next revealed the descriptive statistics of the barriers to political inclusion and shows that out of the 269 entries made, there was a minimum of 1 respondent who selected only 1 barrier and a maximum of 6 barrier selections. Thus, the mean value was 1.99. This is indicative of the fact that the respondents were asked to select as many options that applied to the question.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Barriers to Political Inclusion

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean
Sum of all responses for Q17.1-10	135	1	6	269	1.99
	135				

Source: Fieldwork (2023).

Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics of the barriers to political inclusion in Durumi of the IDPs. Of the 303 IDPs that were asked if they voted during the 2023 general elections, 135 indicated that they did not vote. Out of the 135, there was a minimum entry of 1 with regard to the barrier to political participation in the election. While there was a maximum of 6 entries to that effect. On the whole, the study recorded 269 entries as barriers to political inclusion. This is because the question allowed respondents to make multiple entries with regard to why they did not participate in the election.

### Discussion of Findings

The paper found that internal displacement of persons has been prevalent in the North-Eastern, as well as North-Western and North-Central States of Nigeria. This finding is in consonance with the report of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (2018) that the number of IDPs in Nigeria has doubled in the space of 3 years, from 868,000 people identified by the Nigerian government to 2.8 million by June 2018. The North-East and North-Central have experienced massive population movements with whole communities being forced to flee from the Boko Haram insurgency, farmers/herders' clashes, and ethno-religious violence. Similarly, the IDMC (2022) report states that the state of Zamfara, in the north-west, recorded the highest displacement figure in the country, reaching 48,000 movements. While another 50,000 displacements occurred in the north-western states of Kaduna and Katsina, and the north-central state of Benue. These were majorly triggered by attacks from criminal groups or due to clashes between farmers and pastoralists. In the same view, Ihejirika (2022) posits that Internal displacement in Nigeria has taken an unprecedented dimension as situations of generalized violence such as Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, abductions, Fulani herdsman/farmers clashes, floods, and so on have ravaged our nation forcing millions to leave their habitual residences.

Moreover, regarding the political participation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing at the Durumi camp, the study revealed that a significant portion of them were registered voters in Nigeria prior to being displaced. Likewise, following their displacement, a majority of these individuals managed to complete the registration process and change their polling locations. According to the camp Chairman during an interview, *the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) conducted registration activities at Area 1, Garki, and Durumi to facilitate the inclusion of camp residents.* This is in line with the Electoral Act of Nigeria, specifically Section 12 (1) which stipulates that a person shall be qualified to be registered as a voter if he/she is a citizen of Nigeria who has attained the age of 18 years; is ordinarily resident, works in, originates from the Local Government Area Council or Ward covered by the registration Centre; presents himself/herself to the registration officers of the Commission and is not subject to any legal incapacity. Furthermore, Section 13 allows for the transfer of voter registration to a different constituency under certain conditions, ensuring electoral participation for all eligible citizens. Additionally, the Revised 2022 INEC Regulations for Voting by IDPs, as outlined in Section 1.6, mandate continuous voter registration by INEC State/FCT offices to encompass IDPs in their respective locations, thus enhancing their political engagement.



Previously, the Independent National Electoral Commission took proactive measures in the 2015 elections to enable the voting of a substantial number of internally displaced persons affected by the Boko Haram crisis, despite the fact there was no provision for it in the Electoral Act. Notably, on December 16, 2014, INEC instructed the establishment of special polling units in North Eastern states exclusively for IDPs, along with voter registration and distribution of voter cards. The Electoral Act amendment in 2015, specifically Section 26(1), reinforced the protection of voting rights during emergencies, ensuring that displaced persons are not disenfranchised. Building on this legal framework, INEC developed Regulations for Voting by Internally Displaced Persons in 2018 and issued a Framework for the 2019 elections, emphasizing inclusivity and nondiscrimination as fundamental principles to guide the electoral process for IDPs.

To further buttress this, Anthony (2021) emphasized that with the Amended Electoral Act 2015, Nigeria experienced a new vista in its electoral history in the 2015 general elections as, for the first time, there was voting among the IPDs because prior to 2015, IPD voting was alien to Nigeria's political and electoral lexicon. But as 2015 drew closer, the voting rights of IPDs was elevated to the front burner of election discourse. This further provided a guide for INEC for the inclusion of INEC in the voting process during the 2019 elections. However, a minority 34.7% of the respondents were unable to change their polling units hence, their disenfranchised from the election process. The study further indicated that individuals who were disenfranchised encountered various obstacles that contributed to this situation, including a lack of interest in the electoral process, challenges in transferring Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) to their new place of residence, and insufficient voter education ranking high among the impediments to their participation. This discovery aligns with the study conducted by Drnovsky (2016), which highlighted that inadequate and untimely information poses a hindrance to the electoral engagement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), emphasizing the importance of information accessibility as a fundamental requirement for ensuring fair and transparent elections, particularly in relation to the voting procedures that delineate the electoral process.

Moreover, Durnyeva, Jespen, and Roberts (2019) emphasized the distinctive information requirements of IDPs, considering their displacement from their original places of residence, suggesting the implementation of special electoral mechanisms to accommodate their needs. Additionally, Ihejirika (2022) revealed a significant prevalence of vote buying and coercion targeting IDPs to influence their voting decisions in exchange for promises of increased governmental assistance. As articulated by one of the IDPs: *'the government should improve because I voted this year only because I believe this new APC government will improve more than before, if not, I would not have voted because I don't trust government anymore'*. Another also emphasized that, *'during election that is when the government remember us but after election, we will not hear from them again. If they keep to their promise to us then many IDPs will vote'*. One of the respondent also said that *'many IDPs don't know the importance of voting, they mostly tend to vote for any political party that give them things or money. INEC should provide more voter education'*.



### Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigates the political inclusion of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within the framework of the democratic system, focusing particularly on the Durumi IDP camp located in Abuja. From the analysis, it is evident that a significant portion of the IDP population at the Durumi camp in Abuja actively engaged in the political processes during the 2023 General elections. Nevertheless, challenges such as the inability to transfer their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and lack of voter education posed barriers that hindered some IDPs from fulfilling their civic duty of taking part in the electoral process. Consequently, the paper advocates for: i) the guarantee of political rights and entitlements for IDPs through the inclusion of government decisions and initiatives; ii) electoral administrative bodies should establish special mechanisms to engage with representatives of IDPs and various stakeholders in formulating laws and guidelines pertaining to electoral concerns; iii) there should be a clear delineation of responsibilities regarding voter education, either assigned to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) or the National Orientation Agency (NOA), to enhance the political integration of IDPs; and iv) it is imperative to implement strategies that encourage IDPs to register, vote, and aspire for political positions in their current residential constituencies, thereby fostering participation, assimilation, and the advancement of democratic standards.



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