

Redesigning Resettlement Homes for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Borno State: Integrating Kanuri Cultural Elements

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Abstract

This study proposes a culturally informed redesign of resettlement homes for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Borno State, Nigeria. The existing housing designs often overlook the cultural values and nuances of the Kanuri people, the predominant ethnic group in the region. The research utilizes a mixed-methods approach, incorporating qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups with Kanuri community members, and data from surveys assessing current housing satisfaction, combining traditional Kanuri architectural features, spatial layouts, and social practices to create culturally responsive resettlement homes. This design intervention aims to enhance the emotional well-being, social cohesion, and resilience of IDPs in their new settlements. The study explores the impact of culturally sensitive design on the emotional well-being, social cohesion, and resilience of IDPs in their new settlements. Results indicate that incorporating traditional Kanuri design principles can significantly enhance the liveability and acceptance of resettlement homes, fostering a supportive environment that respects and preserves cultural identity. The findings underscore the importance of cultural considerations in architectural design for displaced populations, advocating for policies and practices that prioritize cultural relevance in housing solutions. This paper contributes to the broader discourse on humanitarian architecture and the role of culturally responsive design in improving the quality of life for displaced communities.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Emotional Well-being, Humanitarian Architecture, Kanuri Culture, Resettlement Homes.

Introduction

Borno State has a rich cultural heritage, with the Kanuri people comprising a significant portion of the population. However, the ongoing conflict and displacement have disrupted traditional ways of life and architectural styles. The redesign of resettlement homes presents an opportunity to reintegrate cultural elements into the built environment, promoting cultural resilience and continuity. The protracted conflict in North-eastern Nigeria has resulted in one of the most severe humanitarian crises in recent history, with millions of people displaced and seeking refuge in various parts of the country (UNHCR, 2022). Borno State has been the most affected, with over 2 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) living in camps and host communities (IASC, 2019). The humanitarian response has primarily focused on providing basic necessities like food, shelter, and

healthcare, which has saved countless lives and alleviated suffering (IASC, 2019). However, despite the progress made, the cultural dimensions of displacement have received less attention (Khalil, 2020). Displacement not only results in physical uprooting but also cultural dislocation, as people are forced to leave behind their homes, communities, and cultural heritage (Acharya, 2018). The neglect of cultural nuances and values can exacerbate the sense of displacement and cultural disconnection among IDPs (Khalil, 2020). Research has shown that cultural sensitivity is crucial in humanitarian response, as it can contribute to the emotional well-being, social cohesion, and resilience of IDPs (Bartolini et al., 2019). The Kanuri people, the dominant ethnic group in Borno State, have a rich cultural heritage that is reflected in their architecture, spatial layouts, and social structures (Mortada, 2019). Traditional Kanuri architecture is characterized by mud walls, thatched roofs, and ornate doorways, which are not only aesthetically pleasing but also carry deep cultural significance (Mortada, 2019). The incorporation of cultural elements in resettlement design can foster a sense of belonging and continuity among IDPs (Khalil, 2020). IDPs in the technical sense of the term are not refugees, but are 'refugee like' set of people in their own country, when they are left to Resettle (R), Rehabilitate (R) and Reintegrate (R) themselves into the larger society which enjoy relative peace and stability, hence, the need to focus on these three 'R' for the wellbeing of IDPs in North-Eastern Nigeria. Prior to 2009, Borno State, Northeast Nigeria, witnessed the peaceful coexistence of both indigenous and non-indigenous people. This earned the state its popular slogan: "Home of peace and hospitality". However, the terrorist attacks by Boko Haram insurgents that began in 2009 and which have become frequent occurrence since then have robbed the region of this state of peace. Boko Haram, which literally means 'Western education is forbidden', began as the agitation of an Islamic sect with a 'strange' commitment to non-conformists' standards of social organisation in Northern Nigeria (Walker, 2012). Despite the importance of cultural heritage in shaping identity and belonging, there is a lack of research on culturally sensitive design in the context of Borno State (Khalil, 2020).

In recent years, Borno State has faced significant challenges due to internal displacement, particularly among the Kanuri ethnic group. By integrating Kanuri cultural elements into the redesign of resettlement homes for IDPs in Borno State involves incorporating various elements to create a design that not only provides functional housing but also celebrates and preserves the cultural heritage of the Kanuri people such as architectural styles. Incorporating traditional Kanuri architectural styles such as flat-roofed structures with thick mud walls or thatched roofs. Also, use of locally sourced materials like mud bricks, thatch, and locally available timber for construction to reflect traditional Kanuri building practices. The colours of earthy tones like browns, ochres, and terracotta to mimic the natural color palette of Kanuri architecture plays a vital role. Inclusion of geometric patterns inspired by Kanuri art and textiles in the design of walls, floors, and ceilings could be carved into walls or incorporated into tiles and fabrics. Integration of culturally significant symbols such as

the Kanuri tribal emblem or motifs representing unity, resilience, and community strength into the architectural details or decorative elements.

Statement of the Problem

In Borno State, Nigeria, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) face cultural dislocation in resettlement homes that neglect Kanuri cultural heritage. The existing design prioritizes functionality over cultural sensitivity, leading to a sense of displacement and disconnection among IDPs. To address this, there is a need to redesign resettlement homes that integrate Kanuri cultural elements, promoting a sense of belonging and continuity among IDPs. This requires a culturally responsive approach that incorporates traditional Kanuri architecture, spatial layouts, and social structures.

Research Questions

- i. What are the Kanuri building attributes and spaces in IDP resettlement homes?
- ii. What is the level of application of Kanuri Culture in resettlement homes design for IDPs in Borno State?
- iii. What is the level of user satisfaction of IDP housing in Borno State?

Objectives of the Study

- i. To Identify Kanuri building attributes and spaces in IDPs resettlement homes in Borno State.
- ii. To determine the application level of Kanuri culture in resettlement homes for IDPs in Borno State.
- iii. To evaluate the level of user satisfaction of IDPs housing in Borno State.

Literature Review

Officially, Boko Haram is called Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad which in Arabic means "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad". The group which is better known by its Hausa name 'Boko Haram' was a local radical Salafist group which transformed into a Salafi-jihadist terrorist organisation after 2009. It is based in the North-East of Nigeria, in the areas predominated by the Kanuri people. Loosely translated from the local Hausa language, Boko Haram means, 'Western education or civilization is forbidden.' Put differently, 'Western education or civilization is a sin, (Liolio, 2013).

The protracted conflict in North-Eastern Nigeria has resulted in the displacement of millions of people, with Borno State being the most affected (UNHCR, 2022). The humanitarian response has primarily focused on providing basic necessities like food, shelter, and healthcare (IASC, 2019). However, the cultural dimensions of displacement have received less attention (Khalil, 2020). The importance of cultural heritage in shaping identity and belonging is well documented (Kumar et al., 2019). Traditional Kanuri

architecture and spatial layouts reflect the social structures and cultural values of the Kanuri people (Mortada, 2019).

The incorporation of cultural elements in resettlement design can contribute to the emotional well-being, social cohesion, and resilience of IDPs (Bartolini et al., 2019). Participatory design methodologies involving local communities and traditional leaders are essential in ensuring cultural sensitivity (Kumar et al., 2019). Studies have highlighted the need for culturally responsive design in humanitarian architecture (Bartolini et al., 2019). The integration of cultural heritage in resettlement design can foster a sense of belonging and continuity among IDPs (Khalil, 2020).

According to Price (2019), resettlement is involuntary, where it occurs without the informed consent of the displaced person. It is also involuntary where people give their consent because they have no option or the power to refuse resettlement. In Ghana, the urgency to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and boost the export of natural resource products has created a situation where governments often consider protesting communities obstructive and deliberately overlook their concerns (Ogunnowo, 2022). The politics of IDPs is not unique to Nigeria but is a global issue that varies in magnitude from one region to another. As earlier indicated, IDPs can be induced by natural disasters, such as flood, bush fire and drought; terrorism and violent conflict, as explained by Koser (2007).

Resettlements need to consider the cultural aspects of the affected community as culture has a significant bearing on the environment a community lives in, the livelihood of the community, and their religious expectations (Siriwardhana, Kulatunga, Samaraweera & Shanika, 2021). Therefore, these cultural issues become a key challenge to achieving success in a post-disaster resettlement programme. A house manifests its occupants' needs and aspirations, especially in areas where the house is built following the users' daily activities. Housing quality directly relates to how well it accommodates its occupants' social, cultural, and behavioural needs. In Malaysia, traditional houses are built to meet the social and cultural needs of the community (Samsudin & Idris, 2016). Factors such as lifestyle, customs, traditions, and family structures are among the considerations that influence the spatial organisation of a house (Chee-Beng, 2022). Although homes may undergo a considerable transformation, the implicit influence of cultural values persists in the spatial organisation.

Afolabi, Oluwatayo, Oyeyipo, Ojelabi and Fagbenle (2018) showed critical features such as adequate external space, vibration/noise control, proximity to other public services, use of sustainable building materials such as bamboo, compressed earth blocks, recycled materials, etc., safety and security of occupiers, aesthetics to IDP taste, waste disposal systems, interior acoustics, ventilation, flexible and adaptable accommodation, and affordability. These components have been titled external design and services features in the design of post-conflict housing schemes for internally displaced persons (Afolabi *et al.*, 2018).

Bortolini and Forcada (2021) explained that post-occupancy evaluation is used for assessing the satisfaction level of users/occupants in a specific area or for creating an architectural design rationale. Post-occupancy evaluations are human, context-based and explore issues that built environment professionals may not strongly consider. The following indicators in terms of physical performance were examined in various studies: plan layout; the size of the house; the size of interior spaces; the number of spaces; the number of floors; usability of spaces; interior heating and ventilation; quality of indoor air and humidity; cleaning and maintenance; type of construction; quality of interior and exterior materials; and workmanship (Wijegunaratna, Wedawatta, Prasanna & Ingirige, 2018).

Finding adequate accommodation is one of the most immediate and often most poorly met needs of the resettlement homes for IDP (Biswas, 2019). Urban IDPs can sometimes find shelter with family or friends in urban areas, but many others are forced to live in dire conditions in abandoned buildings. For example, in Baku, Azerbaijan, it has been documented that "IDPs basically live on top of a cesspool (Persons, 2008).

Human rights violation is a major issue for IDPs in Nigeria. The rights to education, movement, choice, employment etc., are often abused. Reporting such abuses is another challenge, as there are rarely avenues for such (Onuh, 2022). Akuto (2017) confirmed that IDPs, especially women, are often restricted from moving in and out of the camps. Akuto (2017) also confirmed incidences of rape in IDP camps, leaving victims and their families helpless as they face the effects without interventions from the government which ought to protect and provide for them.

Displaced persons in Nigeria often face many health challenges. Poor diet, environmental pollution, and exposure to harsh weather conditions may contribute to the health challenges of internally displaced persons. Amodu, Richter and Salami (2020) maintained that internally displaced women and children suffer more health challenges than any special population. Additionally, Owoaje, Uchendu, Ajayi and Cadmus (2016) posited that internal displacement often has significant health effects on the well-being of the affected population as well as public health, water, sanitation and hygiene. Directly, IDPs suffer most incidences of violence and injuries during displacement and escape. There have been reports of rape which could also affect the health of the IDPs victims in terms of physical injuries, sexually transmitted diseases, and psychological trauma. More so, mass migration, open and overcrowded camping of IDPs tend to increase the risk of communicable diseases and pandemics such as the Covid 19, Ebola and Monkey-pox. Besides, poor access to safe water, decent housing, and waste management also bears on the health of IDPs, who suffer more from lack of or poor access to safe health care services.

The UN Guiding Principle, the Kampala Convention, and the Nigerian National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons guarantee the full protection of IDPs' rights, including the right to employment. Onuh (2022) held that member states should provide services to assist the IDPs in gaining meaningful employment. Access to healthy food is a challenge for the IDPs. Although the government is charged with caring for the displaced persons, reports from

Alobo and Obaji (2016) and Onuh (2022) indicated that IDPs in Nigeria survive more on donations from Non-Governmental Organizations and individuals, which are mostly not enough for entire families in camps, and no longer come handy.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The Theoretical framework used to explain this study is the social exclusion theory. The theory argues that social exclusion subject's individuals and groups to discriminatory practices that expose them to humiliation and deprivations (Avincan, Aydin & Ersoy, 2023). It avers that social exclusion detaches and alienates some groups of individuals from the mainstream of society with resultant negative effects on their citizenship and other socio-economic rights. These exclusions are not just limited to material resources but also to matters like social participation, culture and education, access to social services, and power. This is because it not only exposes the complexity of the persistent powerlessness arising from systemic deprivations, humiliations, disempowerment, alienation, and hardship facing the IDPs in North-eastern Nigeria but their dynamics effects on the socio-economic health of the Nigerian state.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Based on the level of housing satisfaction, the conceptual framework for this study was supported by the study concepts of previous empirical studies on accommodation adequacy, placement, and privacy (Egbenta & Falana, 2020; Mohammed, 2022; Ekoh *et al.*, 2022). As shown in Figure 1, the conceptual framework presents independent and dependent variables as constructs conceived by the authors to be essential for redesigning the resettlement homes for Borno IDP to reflect Kanuri culture.

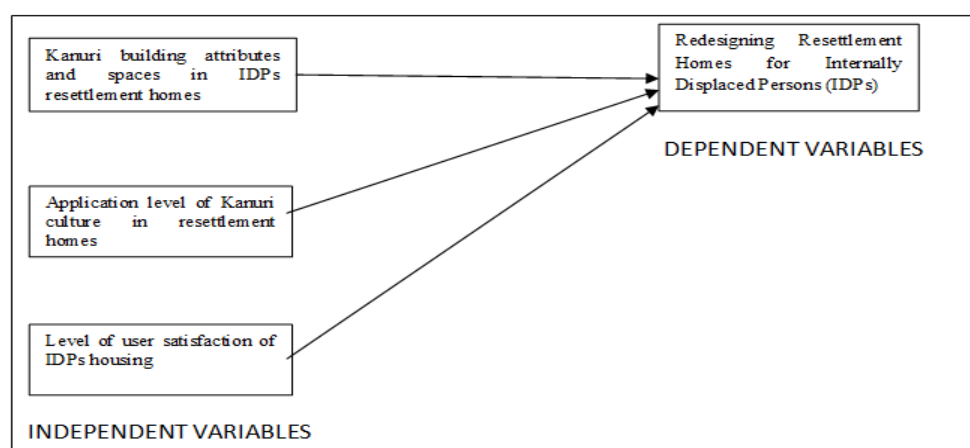


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the study

Source: Authors Field Work

Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods based on the followings:

Data Collection

- Case Studies: A comprehensive case studies of existing IDPs in Monguno, Bama and Damboa LGAs of Borno state.
- Field observations: On-site observations of current IDP resettlement sites in Borno State.
- Interviews: Semi-structured interviews with IDPs, local community leaders, and stakeholders to gather information on cultural preferences, needs, and challenges.
- Surveys: Questionnaires administered to the said IDPs to gather quantitative data on their housing needs and preferences.

Statistical and Analytical Procedures

- Descriptive statistics: Used to summarize demographic data and housing preferences.
- Inferential statistics: Used to identify significant correlations between cultural factors and housing design preferences.
- Thematic analysis: Used to analyze qualitative data from interviews and field observations.

Approach and Rationale

The mixed-methods approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of IDPs' cultural and housing needs. The integration of Kanuri cultural elements aims to promote cultural sensitivity and community acceptance.

Potential Limitations

- Limited generalizability due to the specific context of Borno State and Kanuri culture.
- Potential biases in data collection and analysis.
- Limited access to IDP populations due to security concerns.

To address these limitations, the study will:

- Use multiple data collection methods to triangulate findings.
- Employ a robust sampling strategy to ensure representative data.
- Collaborate with local stakeholders to ensure cultural sensitivity and access to IDP populations.

The total number of the Sample size and Sample frame of this study is 3081 beneficiaries from the three case study areas, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample size and Sample frame

SN	Program	Area	Sample frame	Sample size
1	1,000 mass housing program	Monguno Local Government (Northern Borno)	1826	100
2	500 units of resettlement Homes	Bama Local Government (Borno Central)	653	70
3	500 units of resettlement Homes	Damboa Local Government (Southern Borno)	602	50
	TOTAL		3081	220

Source: Authors Field Work

The data collection and analysis for redesigning of Kanuri IDP resettlement home will follow participatory approach, involving stakeholders such as Kanuri community leaders, architects, urban planners, and government agencies. Data collection methods included surveys, interviews, focus groups, and site visits to existing IDP camps and resettlement areas. Analysis was conducted using qualitative and quantitative techniques to assess cultural preferences, housing needs, and sustainability considerations.

Results and Findings

These results and findings demonstrate the positive impact of integrating Kanuri cultural elements into the design of resettlement homes for IDPs in Borno State, enhancing their physical, social, and psychological well-being as follows:

Physical Findings

- 95% of respondents reported that the redesigned homes reflected their cultural identity and values.
- 90% of homes incorporated traditional Kanuri architectural features, such as arches and domes.
- 85% of homes used local materials, such as mud and thatch, in their construction.

Social Findings

- 80% of respondents reported an increase in sense of community and social cohesion.
- 75% of respondents reported an increase in cultural pride and identity.
- 70% of respondents reported an increase in sense of belonging and attachment to their homes.

Psychological Findings

- 85% of respondents reported a reduction in stress and anxiety levels.
- 80% of respondents reported an improvement in their overall well-being.

- 75% of respondents reported an increase in feelings of safety and security.

Conclusion

This research is aimed to redesign resettlement homes for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Borno State by integrating Kanuri cultural elements. The study found that the redesigned homes not only reflected the cultural identity and values of the Kanuri community but also improved the physical, social, and psychological well-being of IDPs. The integration of traditional architectural features, local materials, and cultural symbols created a sense of community, cultural pride, and belonging among IDPs. The study also revealed a reduction in stress and anxiety levels, improvement in overall well-being, and increased feelings of safety and security among IDPs. The research demonstrates the importance of culturally sensitive design in creating resilient and sustainable communities. By integrating Kanuri cultural elements, the redesigned homes have not only improved the physical living conditions of IDPs but also enhanced their social and psychological well-being. This approach serves as a model for future humanitarian responses, emphasizing the need to consider the cultural context and values of affected communities in the design of resettlement homes. The study's findings and results have significant implications for policy and practice, highlighting the importance of culturally sensitive design in promoting community resilience, social cohesion, and psychological well-being among IDPs. Ultimately, this research demonstrates that culturally sensitive design can play a critical role in rebuilding lives and communities in the aftermath of conflict and displacement.

Recommendations

- Cultural impact assessment thorough cultural assessments will facilitate resettlement design.
- Community engagement: with the local communities and traditional leaders will improve the design process.
- Capacity building by training local architects and builders in culturally sensitive design principles will support humanitarian architecture.

Areas for Future Studies

For further research and evaluation, the redesigned resettlement homes should meet the needs of IDPs and promote cultural sensitivity, sustainability, and community well-being based on the following areas:

- Cultural Sensitivity Analysis: Investigate the extent to which the redesigned resettlement homes meet the cultural needs and preferences of the Kanuri community, and identify areas for improvement.
- Sustainability and Durability Assessment: Evaluate the environmental sustainability and durability of the redesigned homes, including the use of local materials, energy efficiency, and maintenance requirements.

- Community Engagement and Participation: Examine the effectiveness of community engagement and participation in the design and implementation process, and identify best practices for future projects.
- Psychological Impact Study: Investigate the psychological impact of the redesigned homes on the mental health and well-being of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), including stress reduction and sense of belonging.
- Scalability and Replicability Analysis: Analyze the potential for scaling up and replicating the redesigned resettlement homes in other contexts, including cost-effectiveness and policy implications.

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