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Choosing to Stay: Unpacking Immobility Amidst Adversity in Migration Studies

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Abstract

Current migration studies inadequately explore the staying behaviour and experiences of those in conflict or disaster-stricken regions, especially those who choose voluntary immobility. This paper introduces the 'Resilience-Accessibility Framework', derived from existing frameworks and a qualitative study in a conflict-affected region. This framework serves as an analytical tool for exploring the staying behaviour of individuals or community members who choose to stay put amidst adversities. Additionally, it broadens the scope of (im) mobility categories to include a wider range of migratory experiences. By introducing this framework for studying immobility, this paper enriches academic discourse and offers vital insights for policymaking.

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Introduction

The perception of migration as a normative aspect of human life has led to a bias towards nonmovement, resulting in scholarly resources predominantly focusing on studying mobility over immobility (Sheller and Urry, 2006; Schewel, 2020). Immobility is the continuous and habitual act of residing in a specific location at a particular time, whether for short or long durations, within a country or across international borders (Schewel, 2020, p. 329). Despite the 'mobility bias' (Schewel, 2020), pervasive in 'forced migration' and 'refugee studies', the global experiences of COVID-19 have opened doors for more extensive studies on migratory experiences associated with immobility. Nonetheless, Salazar (2021, p. 16) critiques

the

'Western-centric' approach in immobility studies and advocates for an expanded focus on communities and collective levels.

Studying immobility, particularly at the community and collective levels, necessitates more research in locations where community members choose to stay put, such as in conflict-affected communities or those facing environmental challenges. There appears to be a paucity of research concerning the staying behaviour of Nigerians within Nigeria, with most studies focusing on the immobility experiences of Nigerians across the border, especially in North Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. For instance, millions of Nigerians are either forced into immobility or choose immobility due to internal conflicts in Nigeria.

Drawing on fieldwork experiences and existing literature, two stages of immobility can be identified in the Nigerian context. The first, '*first stage of immobility*', refers to immobility experienced within a country's borders. This stage could occur in IDP camps, within the host community, or in one's community (Ogbozor, 2016; Kamta, Schilling and Scheffran, 2020; Shehu and Abba, 2020; Yikwab and Tade, 2021). The *second stage* aligns with Haugen's (2012, p. 66) concept of the '*second state of immobility*'. Haugen defines this as '... the situation of people who have managed to emigrate, but end up becoming spatially entrapped in new ways in the destination countries'. Although Haugen coined this term years ago, his definition is incomplete as it overlooks the preceding process, which I refer to as the '*first stage of immobility*'. This oversight underscores the 'mobility bias' (Schewel, 2020) towards human mobility, often leading to the neglect of immobility.

Within the literature, there are accounts of the immobility experiences of Nigerians who, after fleeing their communities, reside in IDP camps and host communities; it also covers those who choose to remain in their communities, either by paying taxes to violent non-state actors or by collaborating with state security agencies (de Montclos, 2020; Kamta, Schilling and Scheffran, 2020; Olojo, 2020; Higazi, 2022; Samuel, 2022). However, these two groups are not the only ones who do not flee their communities in the event of violence. Some stay put without state assistance and sustain their quest for immobility in conflict settings. The literature has yet to extensively explore cases of community members choosing immobility in conflict areas without state support.

A recent publication underscores the urgency of comprehending immobility in conflict situations. The authors articulate this necessity as follows:

Nevertheless, more precise understanding immobility, as much as mobility, in contexts of crisis – whether caused by violent conflict or the impacts of climate change – is among the most pressing challenges looking ahead, both for research and in aid of better informed policy responses (Erdal, Mjelva and Tollefsen, 2023, p. 44).

This lack of scholarly literature addressing how life choices and adversity, such as violent conflicts, affect immobility in rural Sahel communities, particularly in Nigeria's Middle Belt, led to a qualitative study exploring immobility's determinants in conflict. This study involved data collection through focus groups, with 54 participants across seven groups in diverse

communities in Benue and Nasarawa States who were purposefully chosen because of their quest for immobility in conflict, even without the support of the state. As such, they adopted self-help measures to sustain their immobility. The Ethics Committee of Royal Holloway, University of London, approved the study. The required standards for collecting data on sensitive issues were adhered to, informed consent was obtained, and the data were securely protected and processed. The aspiration-capability framework (Schewel, 2020; de Haas, 2021) initially underpinned the study, but as data collection and analysis progressed, it became evident that a new, complementary framework was necessary to address the research question adequately.

This paper presents the resilience-accessibility framework, equipping researchers with analytical tools to explore immobility determinants in adversity. It addresses a gap in migration studies, specifically the scarcity of 'conceptual and methodical guidelines' to study immobility in adverse conditions, a shortfall highlighted by Mallick, Priovashini and Schanze (2023). The framework aids in comprehending how various factors, such as human agency, resilience, access to specific resources (or the lack thereof), and adversity, interact to shape the immobility decisions and actions of individuals or community members in adverse situations. Additionally, this framework presents additional (im) mobility categories that capture a spectrum of migratory experiences not accounted for by existing categories, thus illuminating previously neglected dimensions of (im) mobility. The primary aim of this paper is to present this framework without delving into the broader findings of the study conducted in the Middle Belt.

The subsequent sections of this paper will present an overview of the prevailing theories and frameworks in migration studies, particularly their application in exploring immobility in adversity. It will then outline a conceptualisation of the proposed framework, laying the foundations for its emergence, which includes a detailed explanation of its components – resilience and accessibility. The following section will showcase how empirical data illustrates the rationale behind developing the resilience-accessibility framework; this is particularly pertinent as existing theories and frameworks lack the analytical tools to capture respondents' immobility decisions and lived experiences within the study locations. The subsequent section will present the framework, including the additional (im) mobility categories. The concluding sections will follow thereafter.

Understanding Immobility: The Scope of Migration Theories in Conflict Settings

Despite the plethora of frameworks available, there remains a lack of unified understanding as to why some individuals migrate and others do not, as well as how affected societies perceive and interpret these phenomena and their wider implications (Castles, 2010, p. 1566). This knowledge gap becomes particularly significant regarding the migratory experiences of those who choose to remain in locations facing crises (Blondin, 2021, p. 291; Erdal, Mjelva and Tollefsen, 2023; Mallick, Priovashini and Schanze, 2023).

Scholars argue that functionalist theories of migration, such as the push-pull model and Neoclassical migration theories, posit that migration is motivated by the desire to maximise income and overcome economic opportunity deficits (de Haas, 2014; de Haas, Miller and Castles, 2020). These theories depict individuals as 'passive actors' primarily responding to

economic factors, thus limiting their agency (Richmond, 1993; de Haas, 2014, p. 17), and overlook the influence of non-economic factors on migratory decisions and experiences (de Haas, 2010, 2014; Schewel, 2015, 2020).

Historical-Structural Approaches to the study of migration such as the dependency and world system theories have offered determinants of migration (Arango, 2000; de Haas, 2014).

Historical-structural approaches to studying migration suggest that international migration is influenced by global hegemonic and economic structures and processes, which create conditions for the flow of people between the South and North (Massey *et al.*, 1993). The New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) suggests that households, not individuals, make migration decisions as a risk-sharing strategy to diversify income and reduce risks (Arango, 2000; de Haas, Miller and Castles, 2020). While NELM explains why some family members migrate while others stay behind, it does not account for the desire to stay amidst adversity. Migration theories are plentiful; Massey (2015, p. 6) used over five theories to describe Mexican migration across two decades; those theories, likewise functionalist and historicalstructural approaches (Arango, 2000; de Haas, 2014), inadequately address structure and agency in explaining migration determinants.

Only recently, it was impossible to combine the concepts of *structure* and *agency* in migration theories to analyse the migratory process (Bakewell, 2010; de Haas, 2014, p. 22). By arguing that people exercise their own decisions (*agency*) in deciding whether to migrate and acknowledging that migration involves not only income maximisation but also structural constraints (*structure*) – such as physical or border barriers – which can impede movement, the Aspiration-Capability Framework addresses the issues associated with the duality of structure and agency that extant theories struggle with (Carling and Schewel, 2018; Mata-Codesal, 2018). The Aspiration-Capability Framework (de Haas, 2021; Schewel, 2022), evolving from the Aspiration-Ability Framework by Carling (2001), provides an analytical distinction between the desire (aspiration) to migrate and the capability to realise this ambition; it theoretically explains the variables that influence migration desires and the constraints that prevent the actualisation of migration (Carling and Schewel, 2018; Mata-Codesal, 2018). The Aspiration-Capability Framework posits that immobility is either due to a lack of capability to move, that staying put is a voluntary choice, or that individuals have acquiesced to immobility (Schewel, 2020, p. 338).

The Aspiration-Capability Framework, a seminal contribution, is gaining scholarly attention and application. However, its use in understanding migration processes in crisis-affected areas remains underexplored. There is a lack of insight into why individuals in these challenging environments might choose not to migrate and how they manage their daily lives amidst such adversity. The framework lacks the analytical tools to fully articulate the migratory experiences of those who decide to stay, including their capacity to adapt during adversity. Previous calls have highlighted the need to explore mechanisms influencing and sustaining immobility in conflict environments (Esparza *et al.*, 2020, p. 246; Marston, 2020, p. 1999). Understanding immobility requires examining the migratory processes of communities in conflict zones, yet migration studies often overlook communities, focusing instead on individuals (Salazar, 2021, p. 16). This neglect results in a greater emphasis on displaced persons in secure areas, such as IDP camps, and leads to the exclusion of those in host communities (Bakewell, 2008; Lubkemann, 2008; Chatty and Marfleet, 2013, p. 8; Xiang *et al.*, 2022), which can lead to skewed findings (Bakewell, 2000, p. 370; Jacobsen and Landau, 2003, p. 195; Chatty and Marfleet, 2013, p. 8).

Consequently, such neglect hinders our understanding of why and how people choose to stay put in adversity.

Apart from security concerns, which can hinder research in disaster areas, Mallick, Priovashini and Schanze (2023) argue that a significant barrier is the absence of frameworks for studying 'environmental non-migration', which extends to various forms of immobility in adversity. Understanding factors that drive and sustain immobility in adversity enriches knowledge and policymaking; nuanced insights into migration determinants in conflict settings are crucial to address better the challenges of those affected, whether they stay or migrate (Erdal, Mjelva and Tollefsen, 2023). The necessity for analytical tools to understand the factors driving and sustaining people's pursuit of immobility in adversity led to the creation of the *ResilienceAccessibility Framework*. This framework draws extensively from the Aspiration-Capability Framework (Schewel, 2020; de Haas, 2021), the duality of structure (Giddens, 1984), and the concept of resilience (Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000; Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker, 2000). The details are in the subsequent sections of this paper.

The Resilience-Accessibility Framework: Conceptualisation

According to de Haas (2021), the intrinsic dimension of migration pertains to the freedom of mobility or immobility as it relates to people's well-being. This freedom allows individuals to derive well-being from the choice to migrate or stay put, regardless of whether actual movement transpires; what is paramount is the awareness of the freedom to either stay or relocate according to one's volition (de Haas, 2021, p. 20). As observed in the study locations, immobility is correlated with the intrinsic dimensions of migration, as outlined by (de Haas, 2021). The respondents perceive immobility as a the 'freedom' to choose where to live, where they believe is best suited to them. When individuals are compelled to leave due to war or distant work, they feel deprived of a vital 'freedom', which can detrimentally affect their wellbeing (de Haas, 2021, pp. 20–22).

In addition, de Haas (2021, p. 21) posits that the instrumental dimensions of migration encompass the utility derived from migration. To the respondents, the notion of remaining in their villages, rooted in a sense of belonging and access to a level of comfort unattainable elsewhere, aligns with the instrumental dimensions of immobility. To the respondents, displacement endangers their livelihoods, identity, and sense of place, leading them to prefer immobility over mobility; therefore, the propensity of community members to desire to remain puts a cap on *aspiration*.

Accessibility

In areas exposed to adversity, such as the Middle Belt, the decision to stay or migrate is often influenced by resource accessibility, particularly access to transportation, firearms, human resources, communication, and money, which significantly influence migratory decisions. Understanding the barriers or opportunities related to resource accessibility is crucial for analysing their impact on decisions to stay immobile.

An excerpt from the focus group underlines the importance of accessibility to these resources:

Moderator: when the attacks happen, what's the nature like?

■

#2-OIU-Y: *Some times they use motorbikes, but most of the motorbikes were the one abandoned by their owners on hearing the gunshots. The Fulani militias use the motorbikes to increase their mobility during the attacks.*

Moderator: *what sort of ammunition¹*

#3-OIU-Y: *They used to attack with AK47 and no RPGs were used.*

#1-OIU-Y: *We used two methods to counter them, charms prepared by the native doctors which made it possible for bullets not to piece our bodies and our own ammunition which were mainly pump-action shotguns; in the process we would overpower them and collect their rifles. That was mainly how we were able to fight them and secure the sort of weapons they were using against us, the AK47s.*

In areas affected by crises, access to resources is vital for those determined to stay; its absence can lead to displacement, even among those who prefer to remain. Insights from respondents indicate that successfully sustaining their chosen staying behaviours depends on their resource accessibility and the ability to utilise personal attributes to overcome the challenges they encounter. Thus, *accessibility to capabilities to surmount restrictions* is vital to human agency (for desired immobility) in adversity.

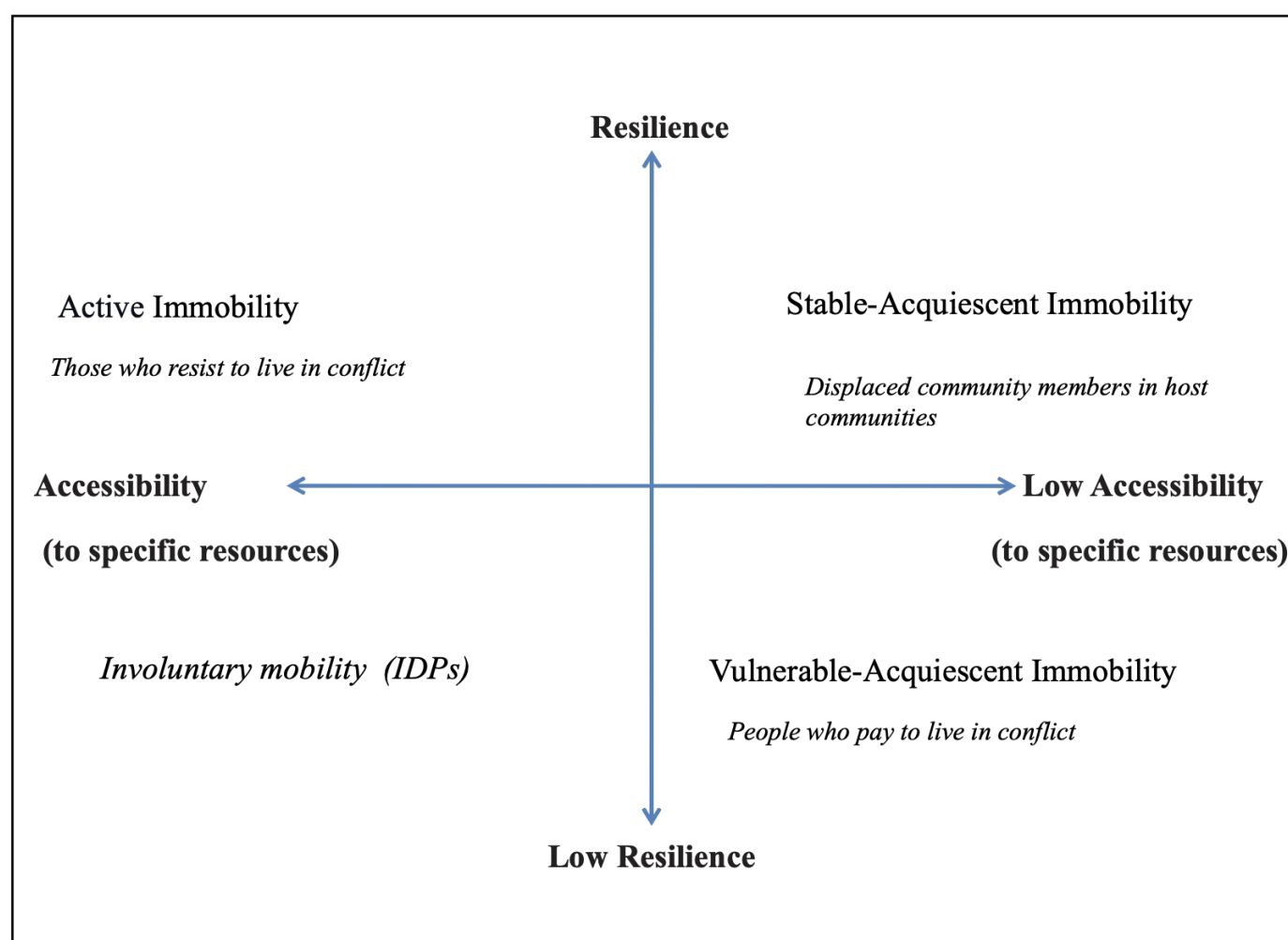


Figure 1. (im)mobility categories according to the resilience-accessibility framework

Notes: Adapted from de Haas (de Haas, 2021) and Schewel (Schewel, 2020) with inputs from Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000) and (Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000).

Hence, accessibility refers to the ease of accessing economic resources, weapons, transportation infrastructure, telecommunication services, and financial resources, which can enhance resilience and influence staying behaviour in times of adversity.

By examining how access, or lack thereof, to human and material resources, affects decisionmaking during conflict, we can better understand the challenges faced, how people utilise their agency, the outcomes of their actions or inactions, and how such *accessibility* enhances their resilience and consequently sustains their immobility in crises.

Resilience

There is a lack of clarity about the precise definition of resilience (Cutter, 2020, p. 205). According to Magis (2010, p. 401), community resilience '(...) is the existence, development, and engagement of community resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterized by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise'. In essence, community resilience refers to a community's capacity to utilise its resources in adversity to survive and thrive. Resilience is a process of adjusting to internal or external shocks, and it exists on a continuum, varying according to context and societal interpretations (Chandler, 2012; Bourbeau, 2013, 2015, p. 377).

Spiegel *et al.* (2021) identified three resilience capacities: *robustness*, the ability to withstand stresses and shocks; *adaptability*, adjusting inputs and production to adversity without structural changes; and *transformability*, significant internal changes in response to severe or persistent stresses that disrupt usual operations. Drawing from Spiegel *et al.* (2021), resilience capacities can be referred to as the qualities that aid individuals in adapting to challenges. In this paper, resilience is conceptualised as a process encompassing community members' actions and behaviours that involve leveraging strategies (their assets) and family and community networks (their resources) to adapt and adjust to internal and external vulnerabilities (Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005; Ungar, 2008; Magis, 2010; Bourbeau, 2015). This study assessed the resilience of community members in conflict-affected areas who chose immobility, employing nine capacity areas from the Subjective Self-Evaluated Resilience Score (SERS) by Jones and d'Errico (2019) and incorporating context-related issues in the assessment.

Resilience is a two-dimensional construct comprising *adversity* – difficult life circumstances like violence – and *positive adaptation* – competence at rebounding (Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000,

p. 858). Vulnerability is the pre-event, inherent characteristics or qualities of social systems that create the potential for harm (Cutter *et al.*, 2008, p. 559). It was argued that vulnerability and resilience are inversely related: the more resilient, the less susceptible (Handmer and

Dovers, 1996, p. 487); both are conceptually related and are not diametrically opposed (Cutter, 2016, p. 111).

Communities could be very vulnerable to adversities while being resilient simultaneously; communities and the social groups within them can be highly vulnerable, but that does not mean they lack resilience (Cutter, 2016, p. 111).

A resilience study should explore the vulnerability and protective variables that may influence life situations and then determine the processes underpinning the discovered connections (Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000, p. 858). Vulnerability and protective factors aid in elucidating the circumstances in which people find themselves and how these impact their decision-making (Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000, p. 858). Therefore, as the aspiration-capability framework employs three factors to explain people's (im) mobility (Schewel, 2020), to explore and explain people's staying behaviour in adversity, it is necessary to include vulnerabilities and protective factors (ideas from resilience) within those factors in our analysis. Thus, integrating resilience concepts with the aspiration-capability framework provides essential analytical tools to understand people's (im) mobility experiences, especially the interplay of vulnerability and protective factors on their immobility decisions in challenging environments.

Adopting this approach can clarify how the synergistic interaction of various factors elucidates the immobility preferences and experiences of individuals or community members in adversity. Thus, essential categories for explaining staying behaviour in conflict-affected communities exposed to adversity should include 'retain' factors, 'repel' factors, 'vulnerability' factors, 'protective' factors, 'internal constraints' (Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000; Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker, 2000; Schewel, 2020), and what I term 'internal boosts'. According to Schewel (2020, p. 339), understanding why people choose to stay put involves recognising the appealing conditions in their current location ('retain factors'), the deterrents of relocating elsewhere ('repel factors'), and personal factors that inhibit migration like gendered norms ('internal constraints'). 'Protective' factors are the critical resources that mitigate the impacts of adversity, whereas 'vulnerability' factors exacerbate adverse conditions (Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000, pp. 858–859). Vulnerability factors include displacement, destruction, age, gender, economic status, health, and limited social networks, whereas protective factors comprise social networks, cultural and religious practices, and economic resources.

'Internal boosts' are defined as factors promoting immobility, encompassing psychosocial variables like lifescape, place identity, collective memory, and cultural norms, as well as psychological factors, including cognition, emotion, and behaviour, reinforcing the decision and resolve to stay put. Although 'internal constraints' and 'internal boosts' may appear similar, they are distinct. While 'internal constraints' refer to factors that limit aspirations, like gendered norms (Schewel, 2020, p. 343), 'internal boosts' relate to elements such as place identity, emotion, and behaviour that strengthen the desire to stay put.

The Resilience-Accessibility Framework: Unpacking Immobility Amidst Adversity

During fieldwork, core and follow-up questions were posed to understand why respondents chose to remain in conflict zones and how they maintained this decision without government security support. In the discussion about staying in their village despite lethal violence threats with community members from the community O², one respondent's comment, reflecting the sentiments of others, was as follows:

■

#9-OIU-M: This land is where I was born, and this is my father's land. Wherever I run to, I will become a stranger and may become destitute. Until then, I have been a sustainable person. Why should I become a beggar with my family? I will rather stay if it means to die; let me die. If I die in my house for what belongs to me, let me die. This is why I did not flee. If they want to kill me, let them kill me.

According to the respondent's comments, he views the land in his community as an ancestral inheritance with which he identifies, and that provides a means of subsistence. Additionally, this excerpt highlights fundamental components that the Aspiration-Capability framework alone cannot capture but can be explained by including additional factors:

- a. genuine *agency* to stay put.
- b. a deep emotional attachment to the land that emanates from collective and materialised memories ('retain' factors' and 'internal boosts').
- c. the foreseen and unforeseen impact of displacement ('repel' factors).
- d. a firm determination to stay put or die while protecting the land ('internal boosts' and 'protective factors').
- e. the *structures* or 'vulnerability factors' which they are exposed to.

Firstly, the quotation interpretations show that the concept of land for them transcends mere habitation, embodying an emotional attachment – a 'sense of place' – and a sense of self. This 'sense of place' signifies an emotional bond with a specific place and its importance to them (Kudryavtsev, Stedman and Krasny, 2012, p. 231). In this instance, the bond is akin to a familial relationship and *affinity*, extending from the respondents to their father then to their 'father's land', driving the desire to maintain these ties. Secondly, displacement from this 'father's land' is perceived as not only a loss of identity and ancestral rights but also the risk of assuming undesirable identities like 'stranger' or 'beggar', compelling a willingness to risk life to prevent forced fleeing. In Nigeria, the displacement of community members from their community can drastically disrupt their social existence and pose a severe threat of permanent loss, mainly when land claims depend on actual land habitation (Nwankwo and Ayadiuno, 2022, p. 186). This situation exemplifies community members' emotional connection with their ancestral land, shaping their self-conception in line with the idea that identity is linked to place (Mckinnon *et al.*, 2016, p. 1121). Thus, it fuels their quest for immobility, even at the cost of significant sacrifices.

Questions about measures to sustain immobility despite attacks aimed at dislodging them elicited this noteworthy response, echoed by other respondents:

#1-OIU-M: We used two methods to counter them: charms prepared by native doctors that prevented bullets from penetrating our bodies and our own ammunition, primarily pump-action shotguns; in the process, we would overpower them and collect their rifles. That was mainly how we were able to fight them and secure the sort of weapons they were using against us, the AK47 rifles.

This excerpt highlights three key components:

- a. The use of firearms as a 'protective' factor to adapt to vulnerabilities.

- b. Voodoo as a 'protective factor' enhances perseverance and adaptability.
- c. The crucial role of an organised social network as a 'protective' factor.

The excerpt provides insights into the strategies used by community members in Community O to sustain their staying behaviour. It shows their determination and the extensive measures they are willing to take. These community members are active agents and proactive in their efforts to remain in their community, actively maintaining their lifescape and pursuing their desire to stay. The Aspiration-Capability Framework, while foundational in explaining determinants of immobility, does not fully capture the migratory experiences and contextual realities of respondents in the study locations, particularly their decisions to stay put in conflict-affected areas. An inductive approach was employed to understand these migratory processes better, focusing on specific cases of community members in these locations to identify and analyse patterns in their immobility decisions and actions. The following segments detail this approach.

Emergence of the Framework

Recognising the Aspiration-Capability Framework's limitations in encompassing the migratory process and respondents' experiences, an inductive approach, as well as integrating resilience factors (Luthar et al., 2000; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000) and the concept of structural duality (Giddens, 1984), was adopted to capture and analyse the migratory experiences and contextual realities of community members in the Middle Belt. This effort aims not to challenge but to complement and expand upon this seminal framework, particularly in detailing the experiences of community members who choose to remain amidst adversities like violent conflict or natural disasters.

Therefore, possessing qualities and assets, such as resilience and access to resources, is crucial for developing immobility capacities to overcome adversity and sustain desired staying behaviour. Immobility (Stay-put) capacities are people's strengths and strategies to remain in place rather than fleeing war-torn or crisis-stricken environments. By analysing the staying behaviour of community members through the lens of the aspiration-capability framework, along with their resilience capacities³ and the duality of structure, we better understand their interaction with adversities in their environment and the role these qualities play in their decision to stay put.

The framework was termed the resilience-accessibility framework due to the significant influence that access to specific resources and resilience capacities have on people's migratory experiences in adversity. It provides analytical tools for examining the migratory decisions of community members who stay put or flee in adverse situations, such as violence or natural disasters. It delves into the factors influencing and sustaining their preference for immobility or why these preferences may not be actualized. This approach offers a deeper understanding of the community's decision-making process and lived experiences during crises.

The accessibility component explores how access to, or lack of, economic and socio-cultural resources and human and material assets – including weaponry, transportation infrastructure, telecommunication services, and voodoo – shapes decision-making in adversity. Increased adaptability and enhanced community resilience stem from investing in 'community capitals,' which are resources used to boost productivity and generate new assets in the community (Magis,

2010, p. 406; Kais and Islam, 2016, p. 10). These capitals encompass resources aimed at improving the well-being of all community members (Kais and Islam, 2016, p. 10). Consequently, focusing on *resilience* and resource *accessibility* becomes essential in exploring community adaptability, especially in adversity. The *accessibility* to these resources directly impacts community resilience and adaptability. Furthermore, the decision to remain in crisis-affected areas is contingent upon resource availability, underscoring the need to use these resources as benchmarks for examining and analysing the mobility preferences of community members exposed to adversity.

Giddens' (1984) 'duality of structure' concept further enriches the resilience-accessibility framework. Giddens's 'duality of structure' provided key insights into the concept of 'agency' and 'structure' within the resilience-accessibility framework, illustrating the interdependent relationship between structure and agency. Human agency and social structure are mutually constitutive at the core of social life, existing in a 'duality of structure' (Giddens, 1984). This 'duality of structure' elucidates the intrinsic interdependence of agency and structures, demonstrating how they simultaneously influence and reconstruct each other, acting as the medium and outcome of various practices (Busco, 2009, p. 250). It highlights how social structures enable and constrain agency while emphasising how actions contribute to the reproduction and transformation of these structures. Incorporating the 'duality of structure' concept from Giddens (1984) enriches the resilience-accessibility framework, highlighting how social structures both enable and constrain agency and how actions contribute to the reproduction and transformation of these structures.

The core assumptions of the resilience-accessibility framework maintain that people's staying behaviour, in times of adversity, is influenced by (1) their *agency/actions*, (2) *accessibility* to specific resources, and *resilience capacities*, as well as by (3) the *structures* and *adversities* in their surroundings; furthermore, people's decisions/actions impacts (4) those *structures* and their *perception*. According to the Resilience-Accessibility framework, understanding the factors that influence and sustain immobility among community members in adversity requires examining human agency and structure, as current migration theories do, and in addition, their resilience and access to specific resources. Thus, we must consider four broad factors: human influences, resource accessibility, environmental conditions, and the duality of structure.

Central to the Resilience-Accessibility framework is the understanding that the determinants of immobility in adversity involve comprehending human agency, resilience, and resource accessibility. These elements shape actions leading to immobility decisions alongside structural and environmental adversities. The framework recognises that people's actions in adversity are both responses to environmental challenges and are factors that shape broader perceptions and reactions within the structure. For instance, studying a community that proactively mitigates environmental disaster through self-help to stay put can elucidate the factors influencing and sustaining their immobility when examined through this framework. Such a study, informed by the Resilience-Accessibility framework, will explore and explain their migratory experiences, the adversities they face, and the perceptions and responses (or lack thereof) from the state.

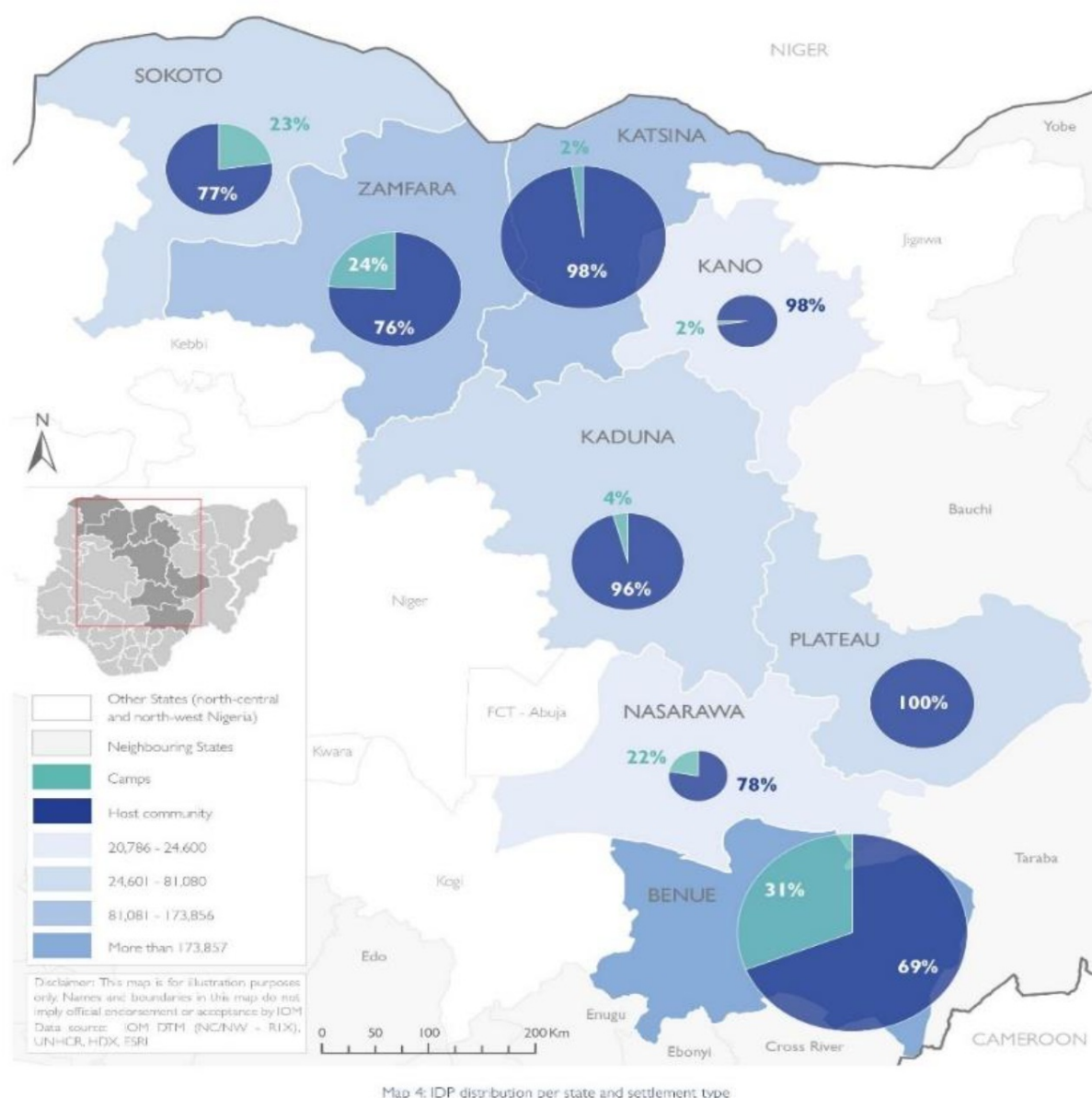
The (Im) mobility Categories within the Framework

In migration studies, (im) mobility categories like voluntary and involuntary immobility, mobility, and acquiescent immobility (Schewel, 2020; de Haas, 2021) span various migratory processes but show limitations in covering specific demographics identified in my fieldwork and other regional locations. The limitations in extant (im) mobility categories have led to the development of new categories that more accurately represent the varied migratory experiences observed in the study locations. For instance, existing categories do not adequately include displaced persons who avoid residing in IDP camps and instead prefer temporary habitation in communities near those they fled from and seek to maintain connections with their community networks. Likewise, existing categories may not fully capture communities that choose to remain in adversity, such as those in conflict zones, where they often adopt protective measures.

The need for more refined (im) mobility categories becomes evident when considering the migratory processes of these communities, as previously discussed. Based on contextual situations and research findings, I developed the (im) mobility categories, illustrated in Figure 1. These categories include *stable-acquiescent immobility*, *involuntary mobility*, *vulnerable acquiescent immobility*, and *active immobility*. These categories of (im) mobility are viewed similarly to how Schewel (2020, p. 336) perceived the extant (im) mobility categories – as ideal types rather than rigid, fixed categories. The distinguishing features of these categories are the levels of *resilience* and *accessibility*, which could determine individuals' capacity to navigate adversities and structural factors within their communities.

Stable-acquiescent Immobility

The term, Stable-acquiescent Immobility, builds upon acquiescent immobility (Schewel, 2020), underscoring the added vulnerability of people due to their limited access to essential resources and reduced resilience. 'To illustrate, "vulnerable-stable" could describe findings where the general disadvantages of individuals or groups with the attribute remained stable despite changing levels of stress' (Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker, 2000, p. 548 italics in original).



Map 4: IDP distribution per state and settlement type

Figure 2. IDP distribution per state and settlement type

Source: (Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) of the International Organization for Migration, 2022, p. 16)

Despite lacking specific attributes or competencies that make them vulnerable, people in this category adapt amid rising stress levels. They maintain stability in adverse places, possibly due to their resolve not to move and some form of resilience (see Figure 1).

Vulnerable-stable or simply *stable-acquiescent immobility* describes a migratory phenomenon where community members choose to stay put, exhibiting resilience capacities to withstand challenges; however, limited access to vital resources hinders the achievement of their preferred immobility and results in displacement. The stable-acquiescent immobility

category pertains to individuals or community members who intentionally seek to stay within their community but cannot accomplish this independently. Typically, they reside in close proximity to the communities they have fled rather than in IDP camps. This category also encompasses those who may periodically return to and subsequently flee their villages, seeking refuge in host communities. Their limited access to specific resources renders their resilience capacities inadequate to maintain their preferred immobility. Despite these resource constraints and exposure to vulnerabilities, they attempt to adapt to heightened adversity, remaining resolved to return to their community.

My fieldwork observations and the 2022 International Organization for Migration report reveal that most individuals displaced by violence in the Middle Belt region prefer residing in nearby host communities over IDP camps, despite harsh conditions and the availability of governmental and NGO support in the camps (Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) of the International Organization for Migration, 2022). The report indicates that about 788,284 (81%) of those displaced in the Middle Belt live among host communities, while 181,473 (19%) reside in IDP camps or camp-like settings (see Figure 2). Consequently, more people fall into this category than any other in Nigeria.

Involuntary Mobility

The ‘... term *forced* (or involuntary) *mobility* is used as an umbrella for characterizing human flows in which there is an element of coercion, including the threat to life, health, and freedom as a result of political persecution and conflicts or natural or anthropogenic disasters (Tsapenko, 2021, p. 526, italics in original). In the context of the Middle Belt, the involuntary mobility category comprises community members ‘forced’ to move due to vulnerabilities, seeking sanctuary far from where they fled (see Figure 1). Involuntary mobility among community members stems from exposure to violent conflicts; they have low resilience to withstand the violence in their communities yet have access to resources that enable them to flee despite a desire to stay put. Within the framework, involuntary mobility describes a migratory process in which people, due to limited *resilience capacities*, are forced to leave their community and use their *access* to specific resources to relocate to safer environments.

Adversities can compel people to move against their wishes to stay put, driving them to seek safety and opportunities far from their communities. Within the Agatu local government area, instances of mobility are often prompted by violent conflicts, causing coercive factors to drive community members to flee their communities. Hence, their movement is referred to be *involuntary*. Their lack of resilience increases their vulnerability. *Typically, vulnerability is inevitable, but their vulnerable situation must be viewed from the context that:*

- a. they lack resilience capacities (protective factors and internal boosts) to adapt.
- b. they have accessibility to move.
- c. they are exposed to violence (vulnerability factors) out of their control, compelling (‘forced’) them to flee.
- d. relocation was still possible despite uncertainties beyond their communities (repel factors).

As a result, We can infer that their departure was involuntary, motivated by susceptibility to danger, embodying the term involuntary mobility. Contextualising these issues clarifies their vulnerability and the reasons behind their decision to move.

Vulnerable-acquiescent Immobility

As described by Schewel (2020, p. 335), *acquiescent immobility* categorises people who neither wish to migrate nor can do so. *Vulnerable-acquiescent immobility*, however, characterises those who desire not to migrate and have low resilience and access to resources while living in areas exposed to adversity, increasing their vulnerability to harm. This phenomenon can occur in regions with ongoing armed conflicts. Vulnerable-acquiescent immobility considers contextual factors affecting migration decisions, where hardship and a lack of support complicate people's circumstances.

The low resilience and resource accessibility among affected community members result in an inability to resist belligerent armed groups. Their reluctance to relocate worsens their situation, forcing them to endure violence under the captors' authority. Those experiencing vulnerable-acquiescent immobility are vulnerable to adversities such as natural disasters or violence from non-state actors and often get caught in crossfires between these groups and state actors over disputed territories. This category enhances our understanding of the contextual factors contributing to their vulnerability and immobility. In a study in Nigeria, it was revealed that communities in territories controlled by the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP), or Wilāyat Garb Ifrīqiyā, pay two types of taxes to continue living in their communities: 'Daraya' and 'na marayu' (Higazi, 2022, p. 166). Numerous communities continue to pay taxes to bandits and militants to maintain their immobility amidst conflicts instead of fleeing.

In essence, the community members' lack of resource accessibility and resilience to resist armed aggressors, combined with their desire to stay put, not only leads to acquiescence but also increases their vulnerability. Consequently, they often pay armed aggressors, typically non-state actors, to remain in their community based on terms agreed upon with or imposed by these actors.

Active Immobility

The study focused on a community with unique attributes, posing challenges to classification under existing (im) mobility categories. While their experiences partially align with voluntary immobility, this term fails to encompass their context and migratory experiences fully.

Consequently, a thorough analysis led to the adoption of 'active immobility' (Robins, 2022a) as the most appropriate term, a decision backed by relevant research findings. Active immobility is defined as immobility arising from a sense of 'loyalty' or 'duty'; and to '(...) describe those who may have the capability to migrate (and may even have the desire to), but actively refrain from doing so due to a sense of duty or loyalty' (Robins, 2022a, p. 28).

In the context of active immobility (Robins, 2022b, 2022a), it is essential to recognise that necessity, often associated with a sense of duty or loyalty, does not automatically exclude *choice* and *agency* for the involved actors. However, loyalty and duty could sometimes limit conscious choice and agency. Insights from community members suggest that for active immobility to avoid becoming a coerced form of immobility, it should encompass genuine agency (Crawford, 2015, p. 28), a free-willed decision to stay put despite challenges, beyond mere 'duty' or 'loyalty'. For instance, a militia recruit might

fight out of 'loyalty' without truly deciding to do so of their own free will. Such individuals, although among those sustaining their immobility, may not fit into the 'active immobility' category.

Incorporating 'freedom of choice' and 'voluntariness' is key to better conceptualising 'active' immobility. While 'voluntariness' alone might make it seem coerced, combining it with 'freedom of choice' ensures 'active' immobility results from 'free will' and is 'active'.

Conscious decision-making is essential in removing coercion from the term active immobility. Overlooking this distinction can lead to incorrect analyses of the phenomenon. In the O community, the active immobility category encompasses those who engage in actions like armed resistance to maintain their decision to stay. This category aptly describes the migratory patterns of these community members, who deliberately chose to remain despite exposure to violence and a lack of state support; they relied on self-help strategies, including the use of firearms, to enforce their decision to stay.

Drawing from Robins' (2022a, 2022b) concept of active immobility and insights from the study in the Middle Belt, *active immobility* is a category that encapsulates the conscious immobility preferences of individuals or community members who, despite having the ability to migrate and ample access to resources and resilience capacities, consciously choose to stay put of their own free will, and in doing so, strive to sustain their immobility while facing adversity in their communities.

Conclusion

This paper has presented the resilience-accessibility framework, which emerged from a study conducted in the Middle Belt, making a significant contribution to migration studies. It addresses a gap identified by scholars (Erdal, Mjelva and Tollefsen, 2023; Mallick, Priovashini and Schanze, 2023), who emphasised the need to understand the experiences of those who opt to remain in adverse conditions. This understanding is crucial for supporting both those who migrate and those who remain, influencing policy and knowledge (Erdal, Mjelva and Tollefsen, 2023); a key issue has been the need for frameworks to conduct such studies (Mallick, Priovashini and Schanze, 2023).

The resilience-accessibility framework complements existing frameworks by suggesting that people's decisions to stay put during times of adversity are influenced by a combination of personal agency, structural factors, resilience, resource accessibility, and the interplay of various environmental adversities. The core aim of this framework is to facilitate the understanding of the determinants of immobility in adversity. The resilience-accessibility framework is presented with the hope of stimulating further studies on immobility, thereby contributing to the advancement of knowledge. In line with Harari's (2014) assertion that no theory or belief is beyond critique, this framework also invites critical examination. This framework has already been used to study immobility decisions in conflict-affected communities and has the potential to be used by scholars in contexts beyond conflict zones.

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