



THE IMPACTS OF FARMERS-HERDERS CONFLICTS IN THE NORTH-CENTRAL ZONE OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The study x-rayed farmers-herders conflict in the North-Central geo-political zone of Nigeria. Exploratory research was employed; focus group discussion (FGD) and key informant interview (KII) were used to collect primary data from the respondents. The data generated were transcribed and recorded verbatim (word-for-word account of verbal interview) and they were converted into written form. Data were enumerated and thematic analysis and categorization were provided. Secondary data were sourced from the internet and relevant books. This study adopted the social theory. The findings of the study revealed that the destruction of farmlands by cattle is one of the major causes of the farmers-herdsmen crisis in the north-central zone. It also revealed that the harassment of herders by the host community, that is, the youths, is another factor which instigates animosity thereby leading to a farmers and herdsmen crisis in the North-Central zone. It discovered that farmers-herders conflict has reduced the quality of the social relationship between both the farmers and herdsmen, and resulted in the loss of human life, houses and properties worth billions of naira in the zone of North-Central. The paper recommended that government at all levels and critical stakeholders should exercise good leadership and political will by bringing the warring parties to a dialogue table while meting punishment and rewards where necessary so as to restore peace, order and trust in the populace. The level of destruction incurred by the warring parties should be assessed, and both governmental and non-governmental organisations should work towards financial assistance for the victims of farmer-herdsmen conflicts. The findings corroborate the gaps which the researchers intended to fill.*

KEYWORDS: Farmers, herdsmen, conflict, cattle north-central, crises.



INTRODUCTION

The farmers and herders crisis is one of the major social problems that bestow serious security challenges and obstruct with a severe threat to economic development and the unity of Nigerians, particularly the North-Central (NC) states. Since the outbreak of farmers and herders deadly clashes, the relationship that had existed with cordiality and rapport seems to be suffering untold hardship with several attendant apprehensions that beckon for address. The unity of the North-Central states can only be enjoyed by all when the peaceful coexistence of the sub-regions and their means of livelihood, upkeep and sustainability become a success with the presence and existence of reasonable security of lives and property. This is the phenomenological expectation of every sound-minded citizen of South Western Nigeria.

North-Central Nigeria has witnessed and is still witnessing conflicts of grave proportions among several ethnic and religious communities across the states. These conflicts significantly vary in dimension, process and the groups involved. Monale (2003) explained that some conflicts arise between the same resource user group such as between one farming community and another; others occur between different user groups such as between farmers and herders or between foresters and farmers. Shittu (2020) explained that the struggle over grazing land and scarce resources has over the years resulted in perennial and growing violent conflicts in terms of frequency, intensity and geographical scope. Adisa (2012) observed that the farmers-herdsmen conflict has remained one of the most preponderant resource-use bloody conflicts in Nigeria. Other studies show that land-related issues, especially on grazing fields, account for the highest percentage of conflicts. Putting it straight, studies indicate that struggles over the control of economically viable lands cause more alarm and security hazards as well as violent conflicts among communities. Social and economic factors continue to provoke violent conflicts among farmers and herdsmen. The intensity variations of the conflicts largely depend on the nature and type of the user groups where the pastoralists graze. These conflicts have constituted serious threats to the means of survival and livelihoods of both the farmers and pastoralists with what both groups are tenaciously protecting. According to Abbas (2012), the conflicts (though provocative) over access rights to farmland and cattle routes (labi) have become ubiquitous and seem to have defied solutions. However, Coser (2000) observed that the inevitability of conflict in the claim for scarce resources is considered here as the bane for struggles over the inestimable value for land and its resources, with the claim for ownership and the claim for its position as a common resource. However, the complexity of the land use system that has changed overtime has culminated in present-day tension and conflicts between the host farmers' communities and Fulani herdsmen.

Since the advent of democratic government in 1999, there has been an increase in farmers and herdsmen clashes. The majority of these conflicts have been within Northern Nigeria, which is predominantly agrarian (farmers and herders), and in some parts of the southern part of the country (Hassan, Hassan, & Hussain, 2018). In many of these conflicts, lives and properties have been lost, farm products destroyed, people displaced, and governments at various levels (local, state, and federal) have spent so much money on setting up either committees for resolutions or resettlement camps for the displaced persons. Finances that ought to be used in the development of other sectors are used in addressing farmers-herdsmen conflicts. The implications of these conflicts are seriously felt in the national economy in terms of the resources invested in the resolutions as well as the manifestation of the unemployment it aggravated (Odoh & Chigozie, 2012).



Media reports both international and local have confirmed so many deaths, which is a consequence of the farmers-herdsmen clashes (Erondu & Nwakanma, 2018). The clashes have resulted in population displacement, low agricultural output, and subsequently an increase in the level of unemployment (Odoh & Chilaka, 2012). Agricultural sectors which largely accommodate productive youths and adults have become strained and volatile. Farmers-herdsmen conflicts have contributed to the prevailing migration of people from rural centres (local government), which causes the urban centres to compete for the available opportunities (Odoh & Chilaka, 2012). The agricultural sector's contribution to the growth and development of Nigeria's economy cannot be overemphasized (Olaoye, 2014). As such, inadequate supplies of agricultural products will consequently lead to worries, unrest, dearth of food security, and adverse effects on the national economy and security. Conversely, the availability of agricultural products will result in vibrant health, stable mental and physical development of the citizens, and national productivity (Kigelman, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

The bloody conflict between farmers and herdsmen is one of the social problems that bestow serious security challenges and obstruct, with severe threats to the economic activities of the people in North Central Nigeria. The previous peaceful coexistence and cordiality between farmers and herders in Benue and Plateau States in North Central Nigeria seem to have suffered and are still suffering an unbearable setback regarding their economic activities, which has caused high poverty among the people of the zone.

Research Questions

- (1) What are the underlying factors that caused farmers' and herders' conflict in the North Central zone of Nigeria?
- (2) What are the implications of farmers' and herders' conflict on the people of the North Central zone of Nigeria?

Research Objectives

- (1) To examine the underlying factors that caused the farmers and herders conflict in the north-central zone of Nigeria.
- (2) To determine the implications of farmers' and herders' conflict on the people of north-central Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study examined causes of farmers-herdsmen conflicts, cattle rustling, and banditry; it examined the factors causing farmers-herdsmen conflicts, the impacts of the conflict in the NC zone, and how the security apparatus has fared in combating the menace in the selected states of the geo-political zone.



Conceptual Clarification

This section will be dedicated to clarifying some concepts that are germane to the philosophical understanding of this paper.

Conflict refers to differences in interests and goals made manifest through violent clashes between a minimum of two groups at a given point in time. This study is primarily concerned with the conflict between herders and farmers in Nigeria resulting from resource scarcity and other factors, as well as its ranging effects on farming communities.

Herders are prevalently Fulani nomads who rear and move their cattle from Northern Nigeria down South. They are hosted in farming communities and come in contact with farmers in various parts of Nigeria. The usage of the word “herders” in this study is alternated with “herdsmen” and “pastoralists.”

Farmers refer to those who are involved in the planting and growing of arable crops. Specifically, these are sedentary cultivators in various regions of Nigeria who have direct interactions—and disputes resultant there from—with herders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the paper deals with the overview of the genesis of the farmers and herders crisis in Nigeria. Tracing the history of herdsmen in Nigeria, Danver (2015) noted that Hausa Language speakers interpret the term Fulani largely describing the nomadic people commonly found across West Africa. Historical pundits also trace the history of nomadism in Nigeria to the backdrop of Fulani herdsmen of Futa Jalon in present-day Guinea, specifically Takrur on the Futa Jalon highlands of the 15th century (Olaoye, 2014). The innate behaviour of Fulani origin of Futa Jalon background was said to be settling and razing as strangers in unused parcels of land, and it is normally expected that they breach preexisting security protocols and order, and would move to conquer any less powerful land owners and tribes. This type of behaviour, according to Shittu (2020), is characteristic of the Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria which has consistently defined their strategy by friendly occupation before getting into hostilities with the host communities.

Those who view farmers-herders conflicts from the economic perspective assert that the struggle over the use of land resources for livelihood, and economic interests have been at the centre of farmers and herders conflicts in Nigeria (Zayyad, 2018). For instance, a study carried out by Ibrahim et al (2015) showed that the increase in crop farming in wetland areas and the expansion in grazing land areas have been sources of conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria. The study further showed that there has been an increase in agricultural land uses in all parts of the country, with the major change appearing to be intensive row crop farming covering large areas in Taraba, Benue, Nasarawa, Jigawa and parts of Cross River, Oyo and Niger States. In the same vein, the study also revealed that extensive grazing has also expanded with the main expansions covering lands in Taraba, Plateau, and Kwara States. The summary of the study of land use by farmers and herders showed that intensive row crops consumed 43,778.60km of Nigeria’s total land area, while extensive grazing consumed 21,913.75km of the country’s total land area, (Ibrahim et al 2015). The study further revealed that the increase in the land use by both farmers and herders brought about some form of overlap, that is, an



extension or encroachment of one into another leading to more competition over available land space for utilization by the two interest groups.

However, Nzeh, (2015) and Doyin, (2017) in their respective studies posit that prior to 2012; there has been cordial, peaceful and harmonious relationships between farmers and herdsmen across the states, except few cases of minor disagreements which never claimed life or affecting economic activities. In fact, Benue and Kogi state farmers and herders were living together peacefully in the past.

According to Omowumi, (2018), the current feud began because of farming, grazing land and water. The farmers accused the herdsmen of destroying their crops by failing to control their animals at the same time the herdsmen began to allege that the farming communities were stealing their cattle. This ugly phenomenon consequently hindered entrepreneurship practices in north-central states because the farmers' and the herders' activities contribute to the economic activities of Kogi and Benue state, Nigeria. Thus, the conflicts between farmers and herders consequently led to disintegration and being internally displaced from their respective villages without considering their businesses and other belonging. Also, Shittu, (2020) explained that the farmers and herders conflict in Nigeria began as a phenomenon of local status and today has developed into a worrisome omen that affects the South Western states and Nigeria at large. The bloody conflicts between farmers and herders have grown in frequency across Nigerian states.

Gaps in Literature

There are lots of studies that have been carried out on Farmers and Herdsmen squabbles in Nigeria; from the literature studied, none has a specific focus on assessing the impact of Farmers and Fulani Herdsmen conflict in the north-central zone of Nigeria. The studies conducted by Gamgum (2018) & Oli et al, (2018) focus on the entire country. Oli, Ibekwe, & Nwankwo (2018), derived their data from secondary sources alone which is another limitation of their paper. Ofuoku and Osife (2010) & Adelakun, Adurogbangba, & Akinbile (2015) in their studies became more specific by focusing on Delta and Oyo states. However, the study by Adelakun et al, (2015) is limited because it focused on farmer-herders' Conflict on Agricultural Extension Service Delivery in Oyo State only while neglecting other sectors. The scope of the two separate studies is also vague as they focused on the entire states. The study conducted by Emmanuel, Yahaya and Mohammed (2019) also focused on the impact of the conflict but only in the Agatu area of Benue State. The study by Musa, Shabu, & Igbawua, (2014) tends to be related to this very study as it was carried out in Guma LGA of Benue State. This study bridged the gaps left by the aforementioned reviewed studies as it focused on Kogi and Benue States; FGD and KII were also used as instruments for data collection. The study also traced the causes of the conflict and the social and economic impacts of the conflict on the zone.

Theoretical underpinnings

There are lots of theories that soothe explanations for the impacts of farmers' and herders' conflicts in the north-central zone of Nigeria. The conflict is best described with the use of *social conflict theory*. The theory views social life as a struggle for the distribution of resources and power which are not evenly endowed by nature. Karl Marx (perceived as the father of the theory) and other proponents of the theory see society as an assemblage of people with



variances in their needs and interests in the face of scarce resources. This results in inequality that leads to social conflict and social change.

The social conflict theory primarily focuses on struggles for power and control in society as a major causal factor of conflict. Conflict happens when the major actors oppose each other in social interaction reciprocally exerting social powers in an effort to attain limited or incompatible goals and thwart the opponent from attaining them. Sequel to the above, the governments at all levels have not been able to quell the contending issues between the farmers and the herdsmen.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research strategy as the methodological approach to finding answers to the research questions raised. This choice is influenced by the researcher's quest to engage the people being studied and access their local knowledge on the causes and consequences of the crises. In addition, to understand the underlying factors that caused the herders-farmers conflict in the NC; the impacts of the conflict in the NC zone; and how the security apparatus has fared in combating the menace, the researcher adopt both primary and secondary data sources to collect data and spent over a two-month period, September to November 2022, from the six states of NC zones; Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau States. Key Informant interviews (KII), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), participant observations and text and document analysis were used as qualitative tools to collect the data. Finally, the qualitative strategy allowed the researcher the opportunity to present his own version of social reality since knowledge under this paradigm is viewed as indeterminate, in addition to the subjective interpretation of the conflict as explained by the respondents (Bryman, 2012, p. 33).

Area of the Study

This study was carried out in Kogi and Benue States. The study covered the Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State. The Local Government Areas selected for the study across the State were those affected by the crisis. Kogi East which was the most affected area, the Local Governments affected include Ankpa, Dekina, Igalamela/Odolu, Ofu and Omala LGAs. In Benue State, nine out of the 23 local governments, namely Guma, GwerWest, Agatu, Logo, Kwande, Ukum, Tarka and the Northern part of Makurdi are mostly affected by the rampaging herdsmen and farmers crises.

Sample size and Sampling Technique(s)

A total sample of 90 respondents were selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. A total of 30 respondents for the KII and 60 for the FGD. In the first stage, a cluster sampling technique was used to divide the study area into three areas, selecting three out of six senatorial districts in both Benue and Kogi States. They are based on the senatorial districts (Zone A, Zone B, and Zone C). Zone A is made up of 9 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Kogi East: Ankpa, Bassa, Dekina, Ibaji, Idah, Igalamela/Odolu, Ofu, Olamoboro and Omala. Zone B is Benue North East, made up of 7 LGAs: Katsina Ala, Logo, Ukum, Konshisha, Ushihiongo, Kwande and Vandeikya. Zone C is made up of 9 LGAs: Ado, Agatu, Apa, Obi, Ogbadibo, Ohimini, Oju, Okpokwu and Otukpo.



In the second stage, one LGA was selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was adopted in the second stage because the study should be choosy in selecting the affected places in order to generate data from those who have more insight into the trend of the Farmers-Herders crises. The selected LGAs are: Ankpa (Zone A); Kwande (Zone B); and Agatu (Zone C). A cluster sampling technique was adopted to divide each LGA into two locations (clusters) in the third stage. Purposive sampling was used to select five respondents from each location. The sample gave (3x1x2x5) thirty (30) respondents.

Types, Methods and Instruments of Data Collection

The study is exclusively qualitative data research-based. Both primary and secondary data were used in the study. The primary data was collected using focus group discussion (FGD) and key informant interviews (KII). Criterion sampling is utilized when the members are required to satisfy a particular criterion (Creswell, 2013) while purposive sampling was used to identify and choose members who are well-informed and acquainted with the subject matter (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). FGD involves engaging 10 purposively selected farmers, on the one hand, and herders, on the other hand. Ten farmers and 10 herders were selected in each of the three selected local governments, namely, Ankpa, Agatu and Kwande local governments, where there are constant conflicts between farmers and herders.

The interviews were held with six (6) farmers, six (6) herders, six (6) political leaders, six (6) community leaders, and six (6) security personnel; the total is (6x5=) 30. Due to the absence of some respondents, especially the politicians who were out of town for some official outings, telephone interviews were also conducted during the data collection. The KII were conducted using the interview protocol questions as guides. The interviews were conducted in places that were most convenient for the participants. Some of the interviews were conducted in local languages (Igala/Idoma/Tiv). It was taken to language specialists in Nigeria for translation into the English language.

The secondary data sources include newspapers, internet materials, textbooks, journal articles, and monographs. The secondary data are seen throughout the paper; from the introductory section, through the literature review to the discussion sections.

Categories of Respondents for KII

Category	No. of Respondents
Farmers	06
Political leaders	06
Herders	06
Security Personnel	06
Religious/Community Leaders	06
Total	30

Source: Researcher, 2022

Method and technique of data analysis

The collection of data was done qualitatively, and the analysis was also done qualitatively. It was analysed by transcribing the qualitative data collected and presented verbatim by quoting the respondents. The presented data were then discussed by relating the finding with other



empirical findings and theoretical postulations on the impacts of the crises in Nigeria and elsewhere.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section consists of the results of the data collected and then discussions of the findings of the study. The questions asked include the respondent's age and occupation; questions on the major factors that led to the farmers-herders crisis then ensued. Respondents who did not mention one or two of the variables assumed to be the causal factors for the crisis in the objectives of the paper, such as the search for green pastures, poverty, unemployment, or illiteracy, are then asked one or more of these variables if the respondents think the problem(s) is a factor behind the crisis of farmers-herders in NC. A respondent was asked in Kwande what he thinks are the major reasons for the causes of the crisis, he said:

“The availability of pasture, water, good weather condition in the NC zone makes it very attractive to the herders. Because of the nomads' transhumance activities across the borders of the country, they easily recognised the pastoral conditions, take advantage of the lush vegetation of the area and subsequently moved into the zone.” (Fieldwork, 2022).

Another respondent (in Agatu) who happens to be a farmer alludes that the major cause of the crisis in the region is the wanton destruction of their farm products by the herders. He said:

“Many of the clashes between farmers and herders stem from the destruction of farmlands by the cattle which are mostly owned by the herdsmen. The cattle usually enter the farmland to cause damage. This subsequently leads to conflicts between the herdsmen and the farmers.” (Fieldwork, 2022).

Another respondent (a traditional leader) in Kwande posits:

“The major causes of the conflicts have to do with the destruction of farmlands by the cattle which are mostly owned by the herdsmen; the contamination of water by the cattle; overgrazing by the cattle; disregard for the traditional authority of their host communities; and indiscriminate defecation by the cattle.” (Fieldwork, 2022).

One of the respondents who is a herder in Ankpa also accuses the farmers when he said:

“The farmers were also found to be harassing us (herders) and some of our women (sexual harassment of women), burning the bushes, and blockage of cattle routes and water points.” (Fieldwork, 2022).

An Agatu politician who was one of the respondents said:

“It was also found that climatic change which is responsible for desert encroachment and structural factors such as scarcity of resources; reduction in the interdependence of pastoral and agricultural economies. (Fieldwork, 2022)



A community leader in Ankpa also supported the views of earlier respondents by saying:

“It is very clear that they are deliberately destroying the crops; they do it intentionally and when you ask them, they tell you the land belongs to them. Sometimes, they even set fire to farms and burn them. They deliberately do it and if you challenge them, they threaten to shoot you. They rape women on the farms and when the women hear their voices they run away and the herders take their cattle to the farms to eat cassava.” (Fieldwork, 2022)

According to Oche Elameyi, a farmer from Kwande Local Government Area of the state,

“The government is to blame for the activities of the herders. Having destroyed their grazing routes, they are left with no choice but to seek ways, by all means, to fend for their cattle by eating up people’s farms. To make matters worse, most of the time, only two or three herders are controlling over 1000 cattle and it is impossible to effectively control them.” (Fieldwork, 2022).

A security personnel posted to the study area (Agatu) Mr Bilal Ramadhan blamed the farmers as well as the herders for the conflicts in NC. He said:

“The youth among the farmers are involved in raping and harassing of herders’ women as well as the act of stealing herdsman cattle. On the contrary, they also mentioned that herders allow their cattle indiscriminately defecate on the road.”(Fieldwork, 2022)

In an FGD session at Agatu, the response of the farmers berates the attitude of the herders in a clear time. They said:

“The herdsman have serious disregard for the traditional authority of their host communities. They have no respect and they usually assumed that every land belongs to them. They enter peoples’ land with their cattle and cause various destruction.” (Group 1/farmer/ FGD/Agatu)

Similar responses were given in Kwande:

“The herdsman do not respect the authority, they don’t believe in it and they want to control at will. The host communities expect them to do their grazing in harmonious coexistence, however, the lack of respect usually make them go beyond their limit, to the extent of entering people’s farm without any fear.” (Group 1/ farmer/FGD/Kwande)

The responses of the respondents during the FGD in Ankpa says:

“Most of the clashes between farmers and herders start from the destruction of farmlands by the cattle which are mostly owned by the herdsman. The cattle usually enter the farmland to cause destruction. This subsequently leads to conflicts between the herdsman and the farmers.” (Group 2/farmers/FGD/Ankpa)

In another session in Kwande with respondents which is similar to the previous, the respondents further reiterate the challenges they are confronted with as a result of the cattle destruction of the infrastructural facilities:



“Most of the herdsmen have been allowing their cattle to overgraze on our farmland. They allowed the destruction of the farmland by the cattle and thereby making farming activities to be difficult. Therefore, the continuous conflicts between farmers and herders can be attributed to the destruction of farmland, contamination of water, overgrazing and indiscriminate defecation by the cattle.” (Group 1/farmers/FGD/Kwande)

The responses of the herders were completely different from those of the farmers as they were also identifying some important factors which greatly affected them as follows:

“Many of the conflicts that exist between the farmers and the herdsmen has to do with the action of the farmers who mostly engage in bush burning as well as blocking the water point route that is meant for the cattle. There are no other means but for the cattle to enter the farmland.” (Group 1/M/herders/FGD/Ankpa)

In a similar session held with the herders in Agatu, some of their responses show that sometimes the herders are being physically and sexually harassed:

“Those who claimed to be the host community mostly harassed our men and women. These have been responsible for the various conflicts between the farmers and herdsmen. They harassed our women sexually and our men physically. Therefore, how do we stay in such a situation without conflict?” (Group 2/M/ herders/FGD/Agatu)

Another farmer, Usman Akor, from Ankpa LGA of Kogi state said most of the time, “the herders usually come grazing at night with their cattle, knowing that we are yet to evacuate our harvest from the farm completely and disappear before daybreak”.

A respondent who is a politician in Agatu LGA blamed the herders in strong terms for deliberately causing the problems, his words:

“But these strange herdsmen of nowadays send their cattle into our flourishing farms and allow them to consume anything in the farm and no one will raise a voice. These people also have the temerity to challenge the owners of the farms they destroy. Sometimes they confront their victims to come out and attack them if they are pained by their actions. They do that because they go about with AK47 riffle. They take over our farmland and will not allow us to farm. These herdsmen are on a mission to take over our land because those who are supposed to halt their activities are encouraging them.” (Fieldwork, 2022)

In an interview with a herder in Ankpa, he said:

“The harassment of women by the so-called host people is beyond imagination. The youth among the farmers mostly engaged in raping and harassing our women. They sometimes connive with outsiders to steal our cattle.” (Fieldwork, 2022)

Mr Odei, a farmer added that even the subsistence farmers who cultivate to feed their families have been denied access to their farmlands by the herdsmen activities in the zone. The level of destruction has made it more difficult for the farmers to fend for their families.



In a group discussion at Kwande, the farmers lampooned the herders, saying:

“They forget that we cannot live on meat. We need the food from our farms to survive as humans. We must eat rice, yam, cassava, millet, corn and others to survive but not meat. But those who are supposed to cultivate the food are now living in Internally Displaced Persons, IDPs camps. Why would anyone deliberately change the narrative of the herdsmen's activities in our communities when we all see what they are doing in our communities? These herdsmen will trek hundreds of kilometres and land in people's villages, destroying farms and killing the people all in a bid to take over.”
(Group 1/farmers/FGD/Kwande)

From the foregoing, the KII and the FGD had shown the causes of farmers' and herders' conflicts. It revealed that both the farmers and herders have peculiar explanations as to the factors responsible for the conflict and each justifying their positions.

Implications of the farmers and herders conflict in the NC zone

The implications of the conflict can be colligated to humanitarian, social, economic, and security effects. The humanitarian impacts of farmer-herder conflicts cannot be overemphasised. According to Okoli & Atelhe (2014, p.84), local-nomads conflict results in loss of life, displacements of people, human injury and livelihood crisis. In this aspect, the conflict does not only lead to the killing of people but also many are rendered homeless, displaced and poor. In amplifying this point further, Ofem & Inyang (2014, p.517) opined that apart from the killings by nomads and reprisal attacks by the indigenes, some people become widows, widowers and orphans during the conflicts, while other victims of the conflict are maimed or injured. They also argue that people become internally displaced as a result of the conflict, especially women, who decide to stop going to the distant farm for fear of attacks by nomads.

On the social front, the farmers-herders conflict threatens the peace and tranquillity among various groups. In their work on herder/farmer conflicts, Okoli & Atelhe (2014) posited that such conflicts create tense and volatile inter-group relations among various people. This manifests in mutual mistrust and animosity which are often misplaced. In view of this, the herdsmen see the natives as enemies of their collective survival and destiny and vice versa. They continue by arguing that, the conflict creates an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and perpetual tension that threatens peaceful coexistence, security and stability of society (2014, p.85). In this regard, the tense relationship affects the level of cooperation and economic exchanges between the two groups. However, in the case of Agatu and Kwande LGAs of Benue State, the tense and volatile relations is not only between the natives and the herders, but also between the natives and the federal authority as the youth accuse them of the Fulani herdsmen. They also accuse them of unholy alliance with the herdsmen.

The economic impact of the conflicts between the herders and farmers leads to dire productivity and agricultural impasse. Okoli & Atelhe (2014, p.85) contend “that economic consequences relate to losses associated with the destruction of homes, farmlands, community assets, and household properties. In their view, for fear of being attacked, many people refuse to go to the farm, resulting in low agricultural productivity during harvest season”. Further, many farmlands and large volumes of farm crops and produce are destroyed while hundreds of cattle are killed. Elaborating on the economic effects, Ofuoku & Isife (2009, p.53) note that the



conflict leads to a reduction in farming output and income of farmers and herders. They argue that farmers lose part or whole of their farms and crops through grazing by the cattle and indiscriminate bush burning. On the other hand, the conflict leads to the loss of cows belonging to the nomads through indiscriminate killing. In this regard, the output of the farmers and the nomads are reduced, which is translated into lower income. Consequently, this negatively affects their savings, credit repayment ability, as well as food security and the economic welfare of urban dwellers.

The last consequence related to the implications of the conflict is the effects on the security of North-Central and the nation. Scholars are mostly divided on the security consequences of conflict over resources between the farmers and herders (Frerks, 2007, p.15), however, the effects of farmer-herder conflict on security cannot be compromised. Okoli & Atelhe (2014, p.85) asserted that denying any person or group their rights to legitimate settlement and livelihood threatens sustainable peace and development not only in the immediate environment but also in the entire country. This is so because development cannot be attained and sustained under the atmosphere of crisis as humanitarian, economic and social consequences affect productivity. In their view, attendant security and livelihood crises threaten the collective subsistence and survival of the affected populations. Therefore, farmer-herder conflicts threaten human security, as well as national security (p.85).

Main Findings of the study

From the foregoing, the data collected from both primary and secondary sources, the following findings were made;

- i. The destruction of farmlands by cattle is one of the major causes of the farmers-herdsmen crisis in the north-central zone.
- ii. The harassment of herders by the host community, that is, the youths is another factor which instigates animosity thereby leading to farmers and herdsman's crisis in the North-Central zone.
- iii. The farmers-herders conflict has reduced the quality of the social relationship between both the farmers and herdsmen, resulting in the loss of human life, houses and properties worth billions of naira in the zone of North-Central.
- iv. The farmers-herders conflict has led to the scarcity of agricultural products thereby reducing the output and income of Farmers/herdsmen in the zone.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study x-rays the impacts of farmers-herders crises in the North-Central zone, Nigeria. The study concludes that the implications will continue to be felt unless the remote causes of the conflict which range from the destruction of crops by cattle and harassment of herders by host community youths amongst others are addressed. Consequent upon this, the following policy-based recommendations are suggested for proper conflict resolutions between the herdsmen and farmers in the NC zone.



- i. The need for improving security in North-Central through the use of state security apparatus and mobilizing the civil population and some policy decisions are required. This will instil confidence in the local populace to go back to their farms and boost their yearly farm yields.
- ii. The government at all levels and critical stakeholders should exercise good leadership and political will by bringing the warring parties to a dialogue table while meting out punishment and rewards where necessary so as to restore peace, order and trust in the populace.
- iii. The level of destructions incurred by the warring parties should be assessed; and both governmental and non-governmental organisations, should work towards financial assistance for the victims of farmer-herdsmen conflicts.
- iv. There should be a constant assemblage of the representatives of the host communities and herdsmen that will be permitted and committed to take part actively in the decision making and planning procedures of restoring peace to the affected communities.
- v. State governments should designate some areas for grazing fields for the herdsmen and make them pay tax to the state and all herdsmen operating in the zone should be registered in each local government to enable monitoring of their activities.

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