

Conflict Management Strategies and Farmers-Herders' Conflict in Benue State, Nigeria, 2011-2021

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Abstract

The study examined conflict management strategies and farmers-herdsmen conflict in Benue State, 2011-2021. Farmers-herders conflict, a new normal of the wave of Nigeria's internal violence is one of the major challenges that have threatened the security and unity of Nigeria resulting in a significant increase in the number of cases associated with natural resource conflicts. At present, Benue state could be regarded as the epicentre of the conflict. Attacks in Benue State villages have resulted in several deaths and the destruction of properties. The study adopted Conflict, Frustration-Aggression and Eco-Violence theories as its theoretical construct. The study adopted a triangulation method of data gathering technique. A sample size of 399 was determined using the Taro Yamane formula. 378 copies of questionnaires were distributed across the three local governments, namely Logo, Guma and Agatu (regarded as epicentres of violent attacks by herdsmen) from each of the three senatorial districts of Benue State. Tables, percentages and bar charts were used in the presentation of data. The study revealed that the major cause of the conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Benue State is land; the conflict management strategy (style) adopted by farmers and herders during conflict situations is the forcing or competition strategy, whereas the Federal Government and security agencies employ the avoidance strategy, among others. Also, the study concludes that there is a significant relationship between conflict management strategies and farmers-herders conflict in Benue State, among others. Consequently, the recommends amongst others a collaborative initiative such as setting up conflict management committees by the government to include farmers and herdsmen; the rule of law should prevail.

Keywords: Benue State, conflict, conflict management, farmers, herdsmen, trespass

Introduction

Farmers-herders conflict, a new normal of the wave of Nigeria's internal violence is one of the major challenges that have threatened the security and unity of Nigeria resulting in a significant increase in the number of cases associated with natural resource conflicts. Armed conflicts in recent times have a strong link to natural resource exploitation, which in many cases has led to intensified or sustainable violence (Ogele, 2021). Farmer-herders conflict disrupts not only the lives and livelihoods of those involved; they also disrupt and threaten the sustainability of agricultural and pastoral production (Tanko, 2021). The farmers-herders conflict is a security issue that is complicated by various factors, one of which is the geometric progression increase in population, such that, as population increases, natural resources (like land, grasses, water, among others) that are essential for the survival of local communities are overburdened and highly competed for the livelihood of humans and animals (Malthus,1803). This collaborated Ogele (2020a, p.1412) assertion that:

The underpinning wave of farmers/herdsmen's violent conflict is attributed to environmental and demographic factors such as desertification caused by climate change and an increase in population. These devastating conditions emanating from climate change and population explosion coupled with the drying up of Lake Chad Basin have increased the rising wave of the struggle for scarce resources between herdsmen and farmers leading to a violent clash that has resulted in deaths, forced migration, and displacement including the destruction of farms and livestock.

The National Population Commission estimated the annual growth rate of Nigeria's population to be 3.2% signaling that more people will continue competing over usable and available land (Bibi cited in Li, 2018). These competitions often lead to various conflicts, especially between farmers and herders whose culture, livelihood and sustenance are centered on the availability of these resources. Environmental scarce resources such as land and water are the foremost replaceable resources responsible for the production process of both herders and farmers.

The conflict between farmers and herdsmen as users of the scarce natural resource hovers around the limited supply, mismanagement, deprivation and in-egalitarian distribution of these resources and environmental-related issues in the history of the evolution of human societies, especially in contemporary times; and the disruptive conflicts are made manifest by the feelings of neglect, marginalization and deliberate deprivation of the utilization of these resources. Other causative factors responsible for activating the spread and reoccurrence of this conflict are ethnics, political, economic, cultural, and religious tensions which are conspicuous and affect the relationship between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria (Braukämper, 2000 cited in Li, 2018). In recent times, the number of these disputes has escalated into widespread violence and displacement of people.

In line with Chapter II, Section 14 (b), Nigerian constitution 1999 as amended, the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary duty of government; but the Federal government of Nigeria has failed to perform this sacred duty. The state of security in Nigeria from 2011 to 2021 displayed varying considerable levels of security risk, especially, the farmer's and herders' conflicts, which is a serious security risk to the freedom, peace and justice of the citizens of

Benue State and Nigerians in general. The “adverse impact of pastoral violent conflicts has severe consequences in terms of loss of lives, property and disruption of the normal working of society” (Ogele, 2022, p.57).

At present, Benue state could be regarded as the epicenter of the conflict. Attacks in villages in Benue State have resulted in several deaths, communities razed, and buildings destroyed, such that thousands of indigenous people have been displaced by the attacks as many indigenes in the farming communities of the state have deserted their farmlands and fled to secure areas (dwelling in different IDP camps in the state as Internally Displaced Persons -IDPs) due to regular and reoccurring attacks from the herders. The conflict, if not handled strategically in Benue State would aggravate food insecurity and may become endemic in the country for a long time. Although, the Benue State Government has successfully enacted Anti-Open Grazing Law in 2017 as part of their strategy to end the farmers and herdsman conflict; that has not served as a deterrent for the conflict from re-occurring. The Federal Government of Nigeria under President Muhammadu Buhari has emphasized that there is nothing like farmers-herders conflict in the country. Omotoso (2018) concurred with that position with some reservations. In Omotoso’s submission, for conflict to exist the following conditions must be satisfied – (i) recognized opposing interests between parties in a zero-sum situation; (ii) a belief by both sides that the other is acting or will act against them; (iii) this belief is justified by actions taken; and (iv) a process that developed from their past interactions. Since the farmers-herders conflict does not satisfy the conditions to be referred to as a conflict in the law, necessitated the scholar’s stand that the farmers-herders issue does not qualify as one instead it qualifies as trespass in the eyes of the law.

As expected in any practicing democratic society, the rule of law must prevail, hence the herders’ actions are acts of trespass since the Land Use Act of 1978 guarantees state governments power to issue a certificate of occupancy over lands in their domain and the ancestral ownership of lands by families (Okello et al, 2014; Mohammed, 2012 cited in Omotoso, 2018); but the Federal government is looking the other way in upholding the law since no herdsman has been brought to justice, invariably, this study perceives this action as applying the avoidance strategy of conflict management in this situation. Consequently, given the persistent destruction and negative impact of the conflict on the economy and human security, thus, necessitated the need for an empirical study of the situation to investigate and identify the conflict management strategy(s) (styles) employed by the farmers and herdsman (key conflict parties); the federal government and security agencies (secondary actors). Therefore, the study is aimed at investigating and identifying conflict management strategy(s) adopted by the farmers and herdsman (key conflict parties); the federal government and security agencies (secondary actors); and even conflict management committees of communities to be competition, avoidance and collaboration strategies, respectively.

Conceptual Review

Conflict Management Strategies

Conflict is “an essential aspect of a plural society. It is inevitable under the condition of inter-ethnic competition for scarce valuable resources, especially in societies where inequality is accepted and wealth is greatly esteemed” (Ogele, 2021, p.96). Hence, multiple groups and individuals are involved in the ongoing violence in Nigeria between herdsman and farmers, most

notably in Benue State. Two decades ago, problems between herder and farming communities were resolved via discussions, with simple solutions such as a herder paying for the damage his animals caused to a farmer's property if he was unable to keep them from destroying his crops being agreed upon by everybody. This sharing of perspectives amongst groups was not occurring simply after a tragedy. In contrast, during the dry season, herders may seek permission from landowners to utilise lay fallow farmland for grazing purposes (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016).

Within the academic literature, several scholars have proposed various modes or styles of behaviour and solutions for dealing with interpersonal conflict. According to Tabitha and Florence (2019), there are three basic strategies for resolving conflict: dominance, compromise, and integration, all of which were first outlined by Follett and also noted other responses to conflict, such as avoidance and suppression. It was Blake and Mouton as cited in Tabitha and Florence (2019), who originally proposed a conceptual model for categorising the modes (i.e. styles) of resolving interpersonal conflict as the following five categories: forcing, retreating, smoothing, compromise, and issue solving. They categorised managers' five conflict resolution strategies along two criteria reflecting their attitudes: investment in production and interest in employees. Several researchers after Blake and Mouton (Rahim; Thomas; Thomas & Kilmann; among others.) presented conceptual systems for categorising the conflict modes or styles (Maral & Hamedoglu, 2021).

Based on research by Rahim and Bonoma and Rahim, as cited in Lebrague et al (2020), we may categorise approaches to dealing with interpersonal conflict along two main dimensions: care for self and concern for others. The first dimension describes how much effort someone puts into caring for themselves (high or low). How much consideration one has for the feelings of others may be understood along the second dimension. There are five distinct ways of dealing with interpersonal conflict that emerge when the two components (care for self and concern for others) are combined: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising. According to Udai as referenced in Min et al (2020), there are eight different ways to handle conflict: avoidance/dysfunctional modes such as resignation, isolation, withdrawal, and covering up; and approach/functional modes such as fighting, compromise, arbitration, and negotiation. In their conflict mode instrument, Thomas and Kilmann (1974) cited in Tabitha and Florence (2019) considered the intentions of a party (cooperativeness, i.e., attempting to satisfy the other party's concerns; and assertiveness, i.e., attempting to satisfy one's concerns) to classify the modes of handling conflict into five types, including accommodation, avoidance, collaboration, competition, and compromise. These characteristics illustrate how a person's goals and values change during times of conflict. Unusually, all the researchers cited in this study agreed that compromise is a valid conflict management strategy.

Different conflict management methods (styles) call for different steps to be taken. It is important to note that at this juncture that the success of a particular approach (style) depends heavily on context, making it impossible to provide one universally applicable method for resolving disagreements (Rahim et al; Rahim et al cited in Perera, 2020). Scholars like Hart, Hersey, Rahim & Bonoma, Rahim, and Thomas argue that, for conflicts to be managed functionally, one style may be more suitable than another depending on the situation, while others like Blake & Mouton, Burke, Likert & Likert, and Kalagbor & Nnokam argue that collaboration strategy (style) is most suitable for managing conflict (Rahim, 2005). Consistent

with previous research, this study concludes that there is no universally superior strategy for handling disputes; rather, the most effective approach will vary considerably depending on the nature of the issue at hand. As a result, public managers must be able to identify the right approach for resolving a given disagreement and use that approach effectively (Kinnander cited in Jaden, 2018). This will help a great deal in preventing future issues.

The five conflict management strategies (styles) as propounded by Thomas and Kilmann (1974) explicate the roles of assertiveness and cooperativeness in the resolution of disputes from the perspectives of the parties and actors involved. As reinterpreted and revised by Thomas (1992), the avoidance strategy is uncooperative and unassertive; the competition strategy is assertive, forceful and uncooperative; the compromise strategy is both partially assertive and cooperative; the collaboration strategy is assertive and cooperative; whereas the accommodation strategy is unassertive and cooperative. Therefore, the model illustrates individual conduct in a conflict situation according to the assertiveness and cooperativeness of the conflict parties or actors using different techniques (Kaimenyi, 2014). The Thomas-Kilmann conflict mode instrument was useful for this research because it elucidates the intentions and behaviours of the key conflict parties (farmers and herders), secondary actors (the Federal Government of Nigeria and security agencies) and conflict management committees within communities. Public administrators should be familiar with the approaches, strategies, techniques, and processes involved in applying the various conflict management strategies, as this may allow them to steer the governed actions in the course of resolving conflicts as the situation might require, yielding the desired results in the end. The study conforms to Thomas and Kilmann's (1974) conflict mode instrument for handling or managing conflicts in explicating the three strategies identified and employed by the conflict parties and secondary actors such as competition, avoidance and collaboration strategies.

Competition Strategy

One example of a competitive approach is the win-lose scenario, dominating or forcing manner (Longe cited in Jaden, 2018), or the control, contesting, or zero-sum approach. This strategy emphasises self-interest above consideration for the other person. Webb, a well-respected academic, was of the view that the least complicated approach would be to just kill the opposing side. To attain their aims, the participants in this approach do not collaborate but instead behave aggressively against one another. A dominant individual will stop at nothing to achieve their goal, even if it means ignoring the other person's wants and needs. A dominant individual may try to win at any cost if they think they can. According to Tetteh and Obuobisa-darko (2016), if the competition method is used, the likelihood of the dispute reoccurring is low, but only temporarily. If the government has to make a quick call, they may use this strategy. There is a chance the government may use it to deal with a particularly aggressive conflict party. This strategy is suitable when the topics at stake are significant to the party, or when the adverse judgement of the opposing party might have negative consequences for the party. This is also useful for dealing with the adoption of controversial policies or procedures. When the herder-farmer dispute threatens Nigeria's national security, the government might use a variety of responses (Mohammed et al, 2017). When the federal or state government has the upper hand in enforcing a rule of law or regulation, it should not hesitate to employ a more forceful approach.

Avoidance Strategy

Avoidance tactics include staying on the sidelines, pulling away, or just ignoring a problem. People who are emotionally impacted by the stress brought on by the disagreement may choose to avoid it by being uncooperative or passive-aggressive (Montes et al cited in Jaden, 2018). It has been used in "see no evil, hear no evil, and say no evil" or "pass the buck" scenarios. Avoiding a problem by willfully turning one's back on it or isolating oneself from it is an example of this strategy. People who tend to use this approach to dispute resolution generally display a lack of interest in either their problems or the problems of others around them. Avoidant people often hide the fact that they have a problem that needs resolving.

Avoidance can take the form of a passive response to a potentially dangerous situation, such as avoiding or postponing conflict until a better time, withdrawing from a threatening situation, backing down when confronted, changing the subject or sidestepping the issue, pretending like something is not wrong or that there is no problem, delaying dealing with things, or physically removing oneself from the situation (Allan, 2019). Those who choose to stay out of the fray do so in the hopes that the farmers-herders dispute will go away, that it can be solved without their participation, or that the Federal Government of Nigeria and its security services would accept responsibility for its management. If you pull away or ignore someone on purpose, it might make things worse. Avoidance strategy, for instance, might serve as a temporary measure while one decides on their next course of action. When using this approach, a conflict manager or handler may choose to take a neutral stance by not taking either side's concerns too seriously or by being too pushy about their own.

Collaboration Strategy

The goal of effective collaboration in resolving a contentious issue is to reach an outcome that is acceptable to all parties involved (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974 cited in Jaden, 2018). This approach, which emphasises both parties' needs, is often called a "win-win" or "positive-sum" strategy since it seeks to benefit everyone involved. Collaborative conflict resolution is characterized by mutual gain and cooperation between the parties (Simpao cited in Jaden, 2018). To find a solution that addresses the needs of both parties, parties must actively collaborate (i.e., be open, share information, and discuss disagreements). To achieve integration, "the first rule... is to lay your cards on the table, address the true problem, unearth the struggle, and bring the entire thing into the open," as said by Follett (1940: 38) cited in John-Eke & Akintokunbo (2020). John-Eke and Akintokunbo (2020) reference Prein (1976) as saying that this approach has two distinguishing features: confrontation and issue resolution.

By prioritising their demands in addition to those of the conflict parties, managers of conflicts or public administrators using this approach are better able to address the dispute head-on and come up with innovative, constructive solutions to it. Conflict parties are pleased and long-term peace and tranquilly are maintained as the result of a thorough analysis of the underlying issues and subsequent pursuit of solutions. Satisfaction with communication, partner competence, and trust all increase the likelihood of success when using a collaborative approach (McCready et al, 1996). Because of its emphasis on idea sharing, de-emphasis of differences in favour of reaching an effective solution for all parties concerned, and collaborative approach to problem-solving, collaboration strategy is often mentioned as the best method for ensuring lasting peace (Alzawahreh; Montes et al cited in Jaden, 2018). According to Eilerman (2006), one of the greatest ways to handle conflicts is via consensus decision-making, which occurs when all parties' interests are considered before the conclusion. When trying to resolve a disagreement,

Kaimenyi (2014) advised focusing on the people involved as well as the circumstances and their attitudes and behaviours. This approach may help Fulani herders and farmers find common ground and address the needs of both groups. The mutual benefit of the win-win approach will aid in the development of trust and the establishment of a lasting partnership.

Farmers-Herders' Conflict

At this juncture, it is important to discuss the primary participants in the dispute (farmers and herders), as well as the auxiliary players (Federal Government of Nigeria, Benue State Government and security agencies) and the crisis itself.

Herders

Herders are major conflict players because of their role in the management, breeding, and care of animals, particularly cattle in transit. Nomadic herders from the Fulani ethnic group tend to their cattle and other animals as they travel from one location to another. Nomadic farmers may be divided into two categories. The first, known as "pure nomads," move their livestock about at will, while the second, known as "semi-nomads," follow a seasonal pattern of transhumance, moving from highlands to lowlands and back again (Omotoso, 2018). Many different motivations contribute to the occurrence of nomadism, including the pursuit of better living conditions (such as more grass and water) and the evasion of negative consequences (such as taxes, pests, and bad weather), as well as the desire to better integrate into society or increase the economic gain (Omotoso, 2018). Modern herding practices in Nigeria discourage further investments in the livestock industry. Because unlawful grazing on private property and crops results in essentially free food for the cows, the profit margin on each animal is close to 100%. Because of this, herders are more likely to be nomadic and resistant to change. Cow breeding investment is the only private business in Nigeria where the profit margin approaches 100% owing to near nil expenditures on recurring like feeds and feeding, unlike poultry or fish farming where farmers pay the separate cost of feeds, which is subtracted from the gross revenue after sales.

Farmers

A farmer is a person who works the land, grows crops, or tends to animals (such as cattle or fish) and who may be permanently based at a farm. Farmers are residents of their communities who work in the same location to grow crops year after year without moving their farms. In contrast to the practice of shifting cultivation, they cultivate the same area year after year. The sedentary farmers have the same condition: poverty. That they cannot own many pieces of land at once for shifting agriculture raises their levels of hunger, resentment, despair, and susceptibility to being slaughtered by herders (Omotoso, 2018).

Farmers are increasing their efforts to cultivate the land in the north, particularly in the "free" areas where no farming had previously taken place before environmental and economic developments. But some of those unrestricted places were the paths that northern nomad farmers used to graze their animals. Therefore, conflicts arise whenever two groups sharing territory struggle to safeguard their respective interests (Genyi, 2017). According to Omotoso's (2018) argument, poverty is a shared experience among the farmers who stay in one place. As a result, they are more likely to be hungry, angry, desperate, and slain by the herders, and they have a lower chance of owning many plots of land for shifting cultivation. Omotoso (2018).

Federal Government of Nigeria, Benue State Government and Security Agencies

Secondary players include the Nigerian federal government, the Benue state government, the Nigerian police force, the Nigerian security and civil defence corps, the Nigerian army, and other security agencies. Resolution strategies for local disputes are presented, shedding light on how to handle power, social status, and economic advantage fights amongst interest groups. Changing the structure of a society or a government via legislation is often necessary to resolve conflicts. It will be difficult to find a lasting solution to the dispute between the two groups, but there are options and ways to reduce tensions that may be explored. The Fulani herdsmen-farmer conflict may be managed in part by the federal government, local authorities, security services, community leaders, farmers' organisations, and local groupings. Working together, they can improve community safety and administration.

To end the armed assaults on agricultural villages in Benue states, the federal government should devise a plan. All sides should be treated fairly within the law, which must be upheld regardless of their position, and compromise must be sought to eradicate any existing prejudice. The government should also think about restricting the Fulani herdsmen's access to firearms. To further reduce the likelihood of violent assaults, the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps has to create methods to collect information and intelligence for emergency responses. Communities need to be protected by government security personnel against crimes like abduction and random murder. Roads and water systems in these regions would also need to be rapidly upgraded and modernised to accommodate the expanding populations. Policymakers should support business investment to enhance today's farms.

Most of the time, security officers are unable to stop the fights from breaking out. It has been suggested, based on witness accounts and other evidence, that certain law enforcement officials are corrupt and aid in the perpetration of crimes. Nigeria's security forces are a source of instability rather than a reliable arm of government meant to safeguard the country's population (Amnesty International, 2018). People in the state of Benue, which has been the target of several assaults, have lost faith in the government and have resorted to forming vigilante groups to protect themselves (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016)

Farmers-Herdsmen Crisis in Benue State

In Nigeria, the conflict between farmers and herdsmen has mostly persisted as a struggle for access to scarce natural resources (Adisa, 2012 cited in Mohammed & Baba, 2019) and has deep roots in the past. According to Olayoku (2012) cited in Tanko (2021), between 2006 and 2014, the Nigerian Watch Database recorded 615 violent deaths related to cattle; 22 of these deaths occurred after the herdsmen-farmers conflict in 2006; 54 in 2007; 31 in 2008; 83 in 2009; 39 in 2010; 116 people were killed in 2011, a sharp increase from the year before; and 115 people were killed in 2013. In 2014, the slaughter by Fulani herdsmen hit a new high of 1,229. In addition, 604 farmers and villagers were murdered at Agatu, Guma, Logo, and Tarkaa Local Government Areas of Benue State between February 8 and July 17, 2016. The state of Benue alone buried 73 people in a mass grave. Human Rights Watch said in 2013 that more than 3,000 people have died as a consequence of conflict between Fulani herdsmen and Farmers in their villages since 2010. By 2014, it was reported that the organisation had murdered 1,229 individuals. They focus their activities in the Benue, Nasarawa, Taraba, and Southern Kaduna regions of Nigeria, where each of their assaults results in many deaths. These states had almost 5,000 people killed between 2013 and the first half of 2016. There were close to a hundred big assaults on their communities during that time. Over 300 persons, including children and women, were slain in a single assault

in Agatu Local Government, Benue State, during the beginning of 2016 (Ihuah, 2017). Within the time frame specified, the aftermath of these violent acts has resulted in widespread devastation, unnecessary loss of life, and the reawakening of long-suppressed partisan tensions in the country's news.

An editorial from the Pivot newspaper published on April 10th, 2014, summed up the situation in Benue State as follows: "It is appallingly stultifying that the pogrom in their droves under the aegis of Fulani militia... unleash terror, havoc, and destruction of human lives, farmlands, and agricultural produce that is gradually taking a toll on the food security...". It is quite discouraging that the pogrom has destroyed food storage facilities, orchards, poultry, and other livestock. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) reported through the non-governmental organisation Mercy Corps in Premium Times on May 23, 2019 that between 2015 and 2019, an estimated 7,000 Nigerians were killed in the ongoing violence between farmers and pastoralists in the middle belt states of Benue and Nasarawa. Violence in Nigeria has cost the country's economy \$13 billion a year for the previous five years, according to a study titled "Engaging communities for peace in Nigeria (ECPN)". The expansion of Fulani herders beyond their customary grazing areas onto farmland is often blamed for the recurring conflicts that have arisen as a consequence of the constant competition for pasture. Many Nigerians and foreign observers, including the United States, now consider Fulani herders to be the country's second most dangerous organisation, after the Boko-Haram, due to the crisis's worsening nature (Tion & Terwase, 2018). Scholars have made connections between ethnic strife and violence. About 35% of the daily violence reports in the nation were caused by the farmer-herdsmen dispute.

Rather, it is undeniable that trespassing on farms and crop loss do occur during these movements, which are incorrectly characterized as grazing routes. In a normal herd, which may comprise many family groups, the animals march in a column up to 5 metres wide and 2 kilometres long, and by the time they pass any particular spot, anything standing there is destroyed (Frickle; Vengroff; Iro, 1994 cited in Omotoso, 2018). According to a paper presented at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies by Jos, Omotoso (2018) opined that the word "grazing paths" is synonymous with trespassing and is thus prohibited. Those trespassed upon farmlands are legally the property of farmers who have either a certificate of occupancy issued by one of the states or legal recognition of their ancestry under the Land Use Act of 1978. Some of the lands that the herders have been illegally using are now legally the property of others according to the land use statute. Certificates of occupancy provided by state governments formally and legally transfer ownership of such properties. Some people receive legal recognition of their ancestors' ownership of family land. The Federal Government's plan to establish a cow colony as a peacekeeping measure is, therefore, contrary to the Land Use Act and must be scrapped immediately. Therefore, as stated above, any unlawful entrance or grazing by herds constitutes trespass under the law (Okello et al, 2014; Mohammed, 2012 cited in Omotoso, 2018). This shows that the farmers and herders are involved in a legal confrontation characterised by trespass and reverse aggression. Trespass, in this context, involves doing wrong to the farmers or unfair use of the farmers' belonging (farm) or a forceful entry into the land or farm without permission whereas reverse- aggression entails the action of attacking in retaliation as a result of with or without provocation. Considering that the farmers have not done anything to prevent the herders from entering their lawfully cultivated land, it is more accurate to refer to and treat this issue as a trespass rather than a dispute (Omotoso, 2018). Once a trespass has occurred, it can only be

rectified lawfully, which requires strong political will on the part of all levels of government and all key stakeholders (Okello et al., 2014; Mohammed, 2012; Omotoso, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted Conflict Theory, Frustration-Aggression Theory and Eco-Violence Theory as its baseline theoretical framework. Conflict Theory lays forth the criteria for aggressive conflict in formal and informal contexts alike. The theory's goal is to explain the wide range of conflicts that exist, from small-scale disagreements to international wars. Generally speaking, conflict is "any condition in which two or more social entities or 'parties' think that they hold mutually contradictory aims," as stated by Mitchell cited in Tanko (2021). Theorists of conflict have elaborated on the idea that a certain sequence of social interactions is necessary for conflict to develop. Since it provides a comprehensive explanation of why and how conflicts escalate, conflict theory is particularly useful for examining the problem of farmers and herders clashing.

Frustration-Aggression Theory origin can be traced back to a paper by Dollard et al (1939) and Zillmann (1979). They proposed what is now called the frustration-aggression (F-A) theory in that paper and stated that "the essential assumption of Frustration-Aggression theory is that aggression is always a function of dissatisfaction and the occurrences of violent behaviour always require the presence of frustration". They stipulated that "aggression is any behaviour that is designed to damage, inflict injury, or suffering to the person to whom it is aimed". Zillmann (1979), as referenced by Tanko (2020), outlined the theory's fundamental tenets, which are as follows: (i) frustration causes behaviour that may or may not be hostile or violent; and (ii) any hostile or aggressive behaviour is the outcome of frustration. Ogele (2020b, p.73) opined that the "potential for collective violence varies strongly with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity. If there is a significant discrepancy between what they think they deserve and what they think they will get, there is a likelihood of rebellion." The frustration-aggression theory is a significant theoretical framework because it attempts to provide a detailed explanation for the root causes of farmers and herders' violent conflicts. Since it explains why conflicts arise, Frustration Aggression Theory has become one of the leading explanations. When people's hopes are not met, they become disillusioned, and that can lead to aggressive or violent behaviour, as is the case in Benue State between farmers and herdsmen.

In the same vein, the Eco-Violence Theory, a brainchild of Homer-Dixon (1999), explained to some extent the link between environmental elements and armed wars. According to Homer-Dixon (1999), the Eco-violence theory's central premise is that "declines in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth, and resource access act singly or in various combinations to increase in scarcity, for certain population groups, of cropland, water, forests, and fish," which in turn decreases economic productivity for those groups as well as for the larger regional and national economies. People who are impacted may be forced to relocate, adding fuel to existing ethnic tensions, while declines in wealth lead to "deprivation conflicts." Land use disputes between farmers and herders, especially in Benue State, frequently escalate into violent confrontations and exacerbate existing social tensions.

Methodology

The study adopted a triangulation method of data-gathering techniques. A well-structured questionnaire instrument was used to generate the needed information for the study. Also, an oral interview was used for the reconnaissance survey to gather the required information before the questionnaire was issued. The study also employs the simple random sampling technique in the distribution of the questionnaire. The total population of the selected local governments is 728,000 persons; comprising Logo having 228,900, Guma with 262,100 and Agatu with 237,000 persons (National Bureau of Statistics Estimates, 2016). These local governments are chosen (by purposive sampling) because, amongst all other local governments, these were among the top that had the worst record incident of cases in the state in the period under study. A purposive sampling technique was adopted to select from the affected local government areas, one in each of the three senatorial districts, hence, Logo, Guma and Agatu. A sample size of 399 was determined using the Taro Yamane formula. Accordingly, 378 copies of questionnaires across the three local governments were retrieved and used.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The presentation of data was based on the number of a questionnaire distributed and retrieved among respondents in Logo, Guma and Agatu local government areas.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Based on Local Government Area

S/ N	Local Government Area	Population	Sample Size	Respondents	% of Respondents
1	Logo	228,900	125	117	29.3
2	Guma	262,100	144	139	34.8
3	Aguta	237,000	130	122	30.6
Total		728,000	399	378	94.7

Source: National Bureau of Statistics Estimates (2016)

Table 1 is the distribution of respondents based on the local government area of residence. The table indicates that 29.3% (117) of the respondents were in Logo local government area, 34.8% (139) were in Guma local government, and 30.6% (122) of the respondents were based in Agatu local government. The questionnaire was tailored towards the influence of conflict management strategies (styles) adopted by conflict parties and actors in handling conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in Benue State. 100 questionnaires were to farmers, 100 to herdsmen, 15 to security agents, 31 to youth leaders and 132 to the general public.

In analysing the conflict management strategies employed in the conflict between farmers and herdsmen over land use, discussion about respondents' demographic information and characteristics become imperative since the former portrays individual behaviour and therefore individual decision-making. In this study, demographic information includes respondents' sex, age and education.

Table 2: Respondent’s Demographic Information

Respondents’ Gender

Category	Respondents	Percentage
Male	307	81.2
Female	71	18.8
Total	378	100

Respondents’ Age

Category	Respondents	Percentage
18-35 years	129	34.1
36-55 years	188	49.8
56-75	61	16.1
Total	378	100

Respondents’ Education

Category	Respondents	Percentage
None	109	28.8
Primary School	74	19.6
Secondary School	79	20.9
OND	21	5.6
HND/B.Sc	73	19.3
M.Sc/Ph.D	22	5.8
Total	378	100

Source. Field Research, 2022

Table 2 depicts the respondents’ demographic information about gender, age group and education.

Gender Distribution of Respondents

For gender; Male respondents 81.2% (307), while the remaining 18.8% (71) of the respondents were female. Figure 1 below depicts the gender distribution of the respondents.

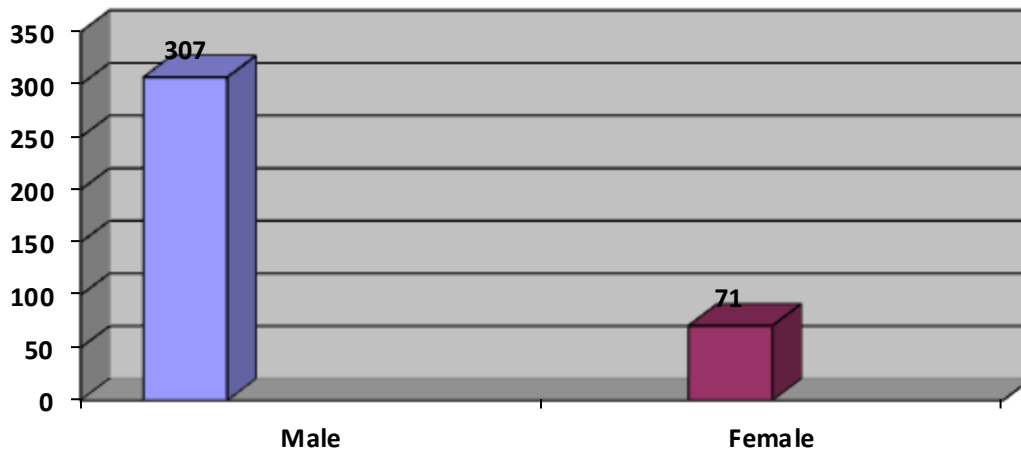


Figure 1: Bar Chart of Respondents’ Gender Distribution

For the age group; respondents between ages 18 and 35 were 34.1% (129), respondents between the ages 36 and 55 were 49.8% (188), and 56 and above were 16.1% (61). Figure 2 below depicts the age distribution of respondents.

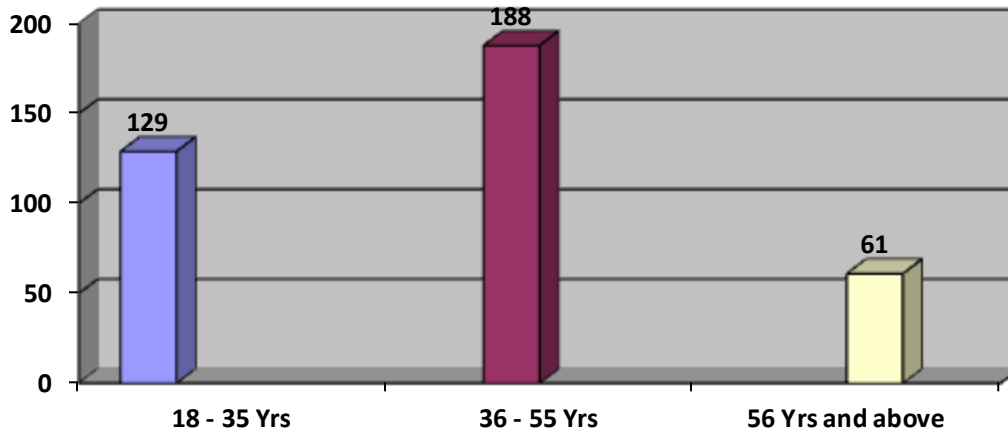


Figure. 2

Bar Chart of Respondents' Age Distribution

Education Distribution of Respondents

In assessing the effect of farmers-herdsmen conflict over land use in Benue state, information regarding respondent education is inevitable. Studies on the relevance of education have revealed that education drives self-assurance and provides things we need to partake in contemporary times. It makes us more independent and aware of what is going on globally today, along with the awareness of opportunities, privileges and rights. For education; it is shown that 28.8% (109) had no formal education, 19.6% (74) of the respondents attended up to primary education, 20.9% (79) of the respondents had up to secondary school education, 5.6% (21) of the respondents had up to a diploma education, 19.3% (73), of the respondents, had up to HND/BSc education, while 5.8% (22) of the respondents had up to MSc/PhD education. The score of 109 (28.8%) for those with no formal education was the highest because most of the herders do not have any educational qualifications compared to their counterparts. Other categories were policymakers, farmers, herders, security agents, traditional, religious and youth leaders. Figure 3 below depicts the educational qualifications of the respondents.

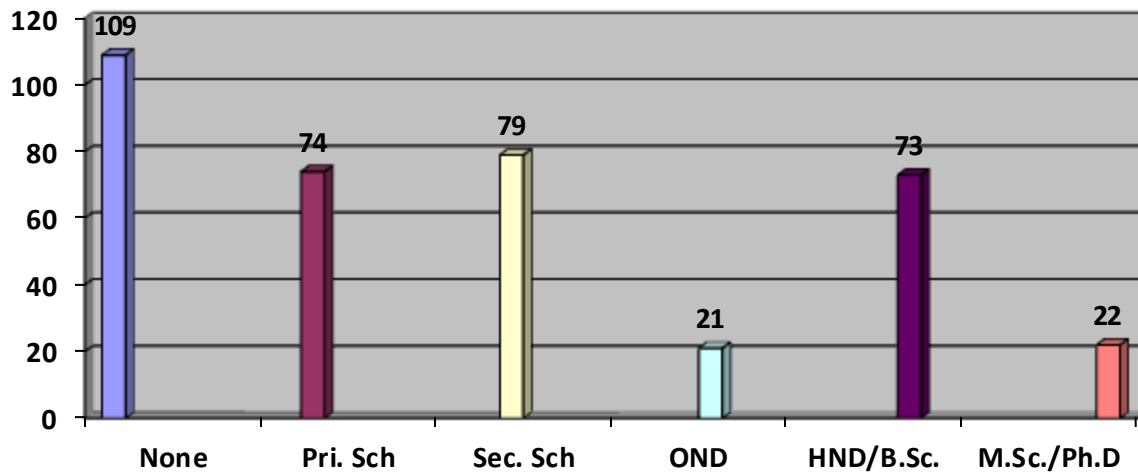


Figure 3: Bar Chart of Respondents' Educational Qualification Distribution

Questionnaire Analysis

Table 3. The synergy between Federal Government and Benue State Government in managing farmers-herders conflict.

S/N	LIKERT OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	TOTAL RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Strongly Agree	222	“	58.7
2	Agree	89	“	23.6
3	Disagree	28	“	7.4
4	Strongly Disagree	39	“	10.3
TOTAL		378	378	100

Source: Field research, 2022

The table above depicts the spread of responses according to frequency and percentage. Strongly Agree respondents 58.7%, Agree 23.6%, Disagree 7.4% and Strongly Disagree 10.3%. The farmers/herders' conflict attracts vested interest because of its ethnic and religious undertones aside the economic factors. The Federal government and Benue State government are working on parallel lines and consequent upon that, it has been one of the challenges faced in resolving the conflict. Since the instrument of coercion is controlled by the federal government and the Benue State government is at dissension, it creates a lacuna in the resolution of the ensuing and escalating conflict. With a 'Strongly Agree' respondents of 58.7% and 'Agree' of 23.6%, it depicts a near absolute majority confirming that there is no synergy between federal and state government in managing the conflict. Since 'Disagree' had 7.4% and 'Strongly Disagree' has 10.3%, they are insignificant.

Table 4. Relationship between conflict management strategies and farmers- herders' conflict in Benue state

S/N	LIKERT OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	TOTAL RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Strongly Agree	286	“	75.7
2	Agree	74	“	19.6
3	Disagree	16	“	4.2
4	Strongly Disagree	2	“	0.5
TOTAL		378	378	100

Source: Field research, 2022

The table above expresses the responses of respondents regarding if there is a significant relationship between conflict management strategies and farmer-herders conflict in Benue State. Strongly Agree respondents represents 75.7%, Agree 19.6%, Disagree 4.2% and Strongly Disagree 0.5%. This reveals that there is a link between conflict management strategies and farmers-herders conflict in Benue State. A productive and result oriented conflict management strategy would lead to constructive conflict resolution. With the majority of respondents accepting that there is an obvious relationship, it shows that stakeholders would be of the view to adopt a conflict management strategy that best suits the conflict situation.

Identification of Conflict Management Strategy Adopted by Farmers and Herders: Views of Farmers and Herdsmen towards each other

In a bid to identify the conflict management strategy (style) adopted by farmers and herders in a conflict situation and its adverse effect, the study sought the measurement of views of farmers and herdsmen towards each other; this is because perception is one of the most important aspects of human behaviour. Perception is the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information to represent and understand the environment. All perceptions involve signals in the nervous system, which in turn result from physical or chemical stimulation of the sense organs. The following section thus, focuses on the views of farmers towards herdsmen and also vice versa.

Table 5 Farmers’ Views towards herdsmen

Views of farmers about herdsmen	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %
Herdsmen are not to be blamed for crops and farm destruction	0	0	0	100
Crop and farm destruction is not done wittingly by herdsmen	0	0	0	100
Herdsmen are cautious and take care of other properties	0	1	0	99
Herdsmen tend to value only their cattle; even more than human lives	91	2	0	7
Herdsmen find it difficult to control their cattle because of their large number.	78	0	0	22
Herdsmen do not take part and or be involved in land degradation	10	5	0	85
Herdsmen are the main cause of farm encroachment; they enter farms to graze their cattle with impunity (trespass) in recent times	90	5	0	5
Herdsmen always adopt dominating, forcing or competition strategies during conflict situations due to frustration (aggression) in recent times	100	0	0	0

Source: Field research, 2022

Almost always, farmers have a negative perception towards herdsmen which could be the main cause of conflict between these two groups. Table 5 shows 91% of farmers strongly agree and report that herdsmen tend to value only their cattle; even more than human lives. It shows that 78% of farmers strongly agree and reported that herdsmen have got a large number of cattle and that they fail to

control their animals and 90% of farmer respondents said that herdsmen are the main cause of farm encroachment; in recent times they enter farms to graze their cattle with impunity (trespass). Further findings reveal that 100% of farmers strongly agree that herdsmen always adopt dominating, forcing or competition strategies during conflict situations in recent times.

Results which show farmers to disagree are as follows; 100% of farmers strongly disagree that herdsmen are not responsible for crop destruction, 100% of farmers strongly disagree with the statement that the destruction of crops is not done intentionally by herdsmen, 99% of farmers strongly disagree that herdsmen take care on other properties and also 85% of farmer respondents strongly disagree on the account that herdsmen are not involved in land degradation.

The table indicates that farmers see herdsmen as very bad and violent people and hold the opinion that they are responsible for every bad thing such as crop destruction, land degradation and farm encroachment/trespass and always want to be domineering or forceful, thus, applying competition strategy of conflict management. This tendency of farmers to look at herdsmen in a negative light can increase hatred between these two groups, hence, increasing the rate of conflict among these communities.

Table 6: Herdsmen Views towards Farmers

Views of herdsmen about farmers	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %
Farmers are not to be blamed for encroaching on grazing area	0	0	0	100
Farmers are not to be blamed for cattle route encroachment	0	0	0	100
Poor farming method (land tenure system) shrinks grazing land	82	11	5	2
Farmers are not responsible for the destruction of water sources for cattle fuelling	0	0	2	98
Farmers do not use more water for irrigation	0	0	0	100
Farmers are not always nice and kind people	72	22	2	4
Farmers always adopt dominating, forceful or competition strategies during conflict situations due to frustration (reverse aggression) in recent times	100	0	0	0

Source: Field research, 2022

On the other hand, herdsmen also view farmers in a negative light. Herdsmen perceive farmers as the obstacle to their activities. They hold the view that farmers are responsible for the encroachment of grazing areas, cattle route encroachment, and poor farming methods, which is the main cause of land degradation and the main cause of grazing land encroachment, water sources distraction and use of more water for irrigation. What's more, they see farmers as not nice people and adopt dominating, forceful or competitive strategies in their conflict management approach. Table 6 shows results on herdsmen's views towards farmers. 100% of herdsmen respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that farmers are not responsible for encroaching grazing areas. 100% of herdsmen strongly disagree with the following statements; farmers are not responsible for cattle route encroachment and water is not used by farmers for irrigation. 98% of herdsmen strongly

disagree with this statement that water source destruction is not done by farmers. 72% strongly agreed and 22% of the herdsmen agreed that farmers are not nice people also herdsmen agree 100% that poor farming methods (land tenure system) cause land degradation which is the main cause of grazing land encroachment. Further revelation stipulates that 100% of herdsmen respondents strongly agree that farmers always adopt dominating, forceful or competition strategies during conflict situations and management due to frustration and desire for retaliation (reverse aggression) in recent times.

Coincidentally, the group of farmers and the herdsmen have put up negative perceptions towards each other and every group views the other group as bad. Farmers see herdsmen as destructive to their crops; they believe that a large number of livestock owned by herdsmen is responsible for land degradation and they graze in the area which could be suitable for crop production. Herdsmen blame farmers for encroaching on their grazing area and cattle route. They blame farmers for using more water to irrigate their farms and use a poor farming methods and cause land degradation which may result in grazing land encroachment. The perception of farmers towards herdsmen and vice versa indicates that each of the two groups is asserting each other; the consequence of which makes it an uphill task to resolve the conflicts. Thus, the conflict management strategy used by each conflict party is competition or forcing strategy; which is assertive and uncooperative by its characteristics.

Discussion of Findings

Results from the study show that the crux of the matter between farmers and herders in Benue state is land which is used by farmers for cultivation and grazing for herders. The major issues involved in farmers-herders conflicts include crop destruction, land degradation and farm encroachment, cattle route encroachment, encroachment of grazing areas, use of more water for irrigation, water sources distraction and Poor farming method which cause land degradation and hence the main cause of grazing land encroachment. Environmental security scholar Thomas Homer-Dixon emphasized the role of resource scarcity and competition as the primary, though not the only cause of the conflict between herdsmen and farmers (Homer-Dixon, 1999; Blench, 2010 cited in Tanko, 2021). Resources scarcity is induced by many factors and is not without consequences. This type of scarcity is essentially a decline in the availability of or access to natural resources. It is usually induced by climatic and environmental factors such as climate change, acute drought, environmental degradation, freshwater depletion, desertification, erosion, extreme heat, and loss of wetlands.

Scarcity of land, water and foliage which stems from unfavourable weather and climatic condition reduces the availability of these resources and usually changes the pattern of grazing by herders and their social relations with farmers. As growing pressure on natural resources caused by the human population increase, growth in the population of the herd, due to improved conditions of the cattle often compel the pastoralists to seek for pastures beyond their limited range (Bello, 2013 cited in Tanko, 2021). The relationship between the pastoralist and farmers becomes competitive over access to and utility of lands and water for cultivation on the part of farmers and herding for the pastoralist.

The study indicates that farmers perceive herders as very bad and violent people and hold the opinion that they are responsible for trespass and every bad thing that occurs such as crop

destruction, land degradation, farm encroachment and trespass. This mindset of farmers viewing herders in such a negative light can grow hatred and consequently increase the rate of conflict among these communities. The finding concurs with the study of Okoli and Atelhe (2014) and Adisa (2012) who concluded in their different studies that farmer-pastoralist conflicts have been associated with the conflict of land resource use exacerbated by dwindling resources. They linked this crisis to the theory of eco-violence, where environmental factors and exploitation of scarce resources lead to conflict and violence. Also, on eco-scarcity and population pressure, Thomas Malthus (1798) in his book entitled “an essay on the principle of the population” emphasized population explosion of both humans and livestock. He proposed that population and resources are initially in equilibrium, but while populations grow exponentially, food production increases only linearly. According to him, the population grows exponentially, while food production grows in arithmetic progression. More so, the population growth will reduce the availability of natural resources because population grows faster than the food supply, and poor people will impoverish the soil and natural resources by overuse and this will induce competition and conflict over means of existence. This may explicate the dwindling grazing resources (land and pasture) and poor management of existing grazing reserves as responsible.

In the same vein, the study shows that herders perceive farmers as very bad people and hold the view that they are culpable for cattle route encroachment, responsible for encroaching grazing areas, use of more water for irrigation, water sources destruction and poor farming method which cause land degradation and the main cause of grazing land encroachment. The mysticism and inclination toward land ownership in Nigeria is also major cause of the conflict. The indigene-settler syndrome is always a factor necessitating conflict over land use especially when there exists a deliberate deprivation or perceived marginalization of one group in the allocation and utility of land and access to water. As a result of transhumance, a pastoralist from the North East and North West part of Nigeria who migrates to the middle belt in search of forage and water inevitably becomes a host and settler and is often seen as a stranger, settler or foreigner. The attendant effects of this are that in case of any further deprivation of resources by the indigenes, the pastoralist often transfers aggression on the indigene for their previous losses and flee while the indigene respond by employing every means of evacuating them from their land (Azeez, Lasekan, Jinap and Sulaiman, 2015).

The views of farmers towards herders and vice versa show that each of the two groups is assertive (concerned for self-interest) and uncooperative (not concerned for others) which is a typical characteristic and key indicator of the adaptation of competition or forcing strategy of conflict management. The results of this study indicate that both farmers and herders share the same views about the conflict. This implies that both farmers and herders have the same experience with the consequences of conflict. Interestingly, both farmers and herders agree that the conflict consequences include: loss of life, destruction of properties and strained social relationship which makes life to become uncomfortable. In a conflict situation, both parties engage in aggression and reverse aggression, thus, adapting the competition or forcing strategy of conflict management. This outcome makes it an uphill task to resolve the conflicts. These results indicate that competition strategy adopted by the conflict parties for managing the conflict between them is not appropriate and is counter-productive; if sustained peaceful resolution shall continue to be elusive.

Further, the study shows that satisfactory solution can be obtained through collaboration strategy of conflict management by creating awareness in the communities of the need for peaceful co-existence and sustaining it; and involving individuals, especially, the conflicting groups to deliberate, come up with the causes, proffer constructive solutions and appropriate strategies suitable to end the conflict through open communication (discussion) and collaboration. Previously, in case of a conflict an amicable relationship was restored between farmers and herdsmen through a collaborative approach characterised by better understanding of what caused the conflict, focusing on the management strategy that best address the issue between both parties, allowing parties in conflicts to find a constructive solution on their own and resolving conflicts by ensuring that both parties accept fair terms of settlement, thus both parties being assertive (concern for self interest) and cooperative (concern for the other party). This is a key indicator of adopting the collaboration strategy of conflict management.

Furthermore, the study finding showed the challenges of farmer-herder conflicts and the implications of threat to human and national security occasioned by loss of life and destruction of crops, animals, houses, properties and strained social relationships which make life to become uncomfortable. One of the major consequences of the perennial conflict, attacks and counter-attacks between herdsmen and farmers in Northern Nigeria is massive death toll of many innocent lives and actors involved in the conflict (Olayoku, 2012 cited in Tanko, 2021). The Institute of Economics and Peace (2015) which rated the Fulani militant as the fourth most deadly terrorist group in the world as at 2014 Global Terrorism Index Report which recorded the dramatic increase in the attacks by Fulani Militants from 2010 to 2013 as 80 deaths to a skyrocketing increase in the death toll to 1,229 in 2014 alone. On the 25th of April, 2016, seven villages in Ukpabi-Nimbo town a border town in Uzo Uwani in Enugu State were attacked by over 500 heavily armed Fulani herdsmen who killed over 48 villagers and left many injured (Ikenwa & Adeyemi, 2016). Also, between February and July, 2016; 604 farmers and locals were killed in Agatu, Guma, Logo and Tarkaa local government areas of Benue state.

Another severe impact is the loss of cattle to conflict and bandits as many herds are lost during the conflict to angry farmers and bandits who take advantage of the conflicts to steal cattle from the pastoralists. On the side of farmers, there is destruction of crops in the farms and harvested products by angry mobs of pastoralist. The negative effect of this is huge loss on both sides with ultimate result of loss of income or capital and food insecurity. Another effect of this conflict is destruction of farm properties and farm irrigation equipment, farming tools, houses and cars by angry herdsmen who usually carry out organized violence as retaliatory act on the farming communities.

Furthermore, the persistent attack by the herdsmen has drawn the attention of Nigerians to the threat it poses to national unity. In line with this conception, the then Honourable Speaker of the House of Representatives, Yakubu Dogara on the 26th of April, 2016 who clamoured for deliberate and proactive actions to end the incessant farmers and herdsmen clashes spreading across the country, noting that if not properly checked could divide Nigeria (Ovuakporie and Agbakwuru, 2016). Another lethal effect of this conflict is the displacement of people from their homes and community for safety reasons. This has become the persistent effect of the clash between herdsmen and farmers in North Central Nigeria. Djadi (2016); reported that over 20,000 people have fled the wave of attacks since 2010. These incidences subsequently led to the establishment of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps.

This situation is enhanced as a result of the lack of synergy between the federal government and Benue State government in managing the conflict. The Anti-Open Grazing law put in place by Benue State government cannot be effective without the collaboration and committed implementation by the security apparatus/agencies controlled by the federal government. This is an indication of the adoption of an avoidance strategy of conflict management by the federal government since negligence, passivity, neutrality and lack of will-power/ignoring to uphold the rule of law in prosecuting troublemakers in the conflict is involved upon in the incessant wanton destruction of lives and properties.

Concerning a collaborative initiative that could mitigate or end the challenges militating against the efforts at addressing the occurrence of farmers-herders conflict in Benue State for enhanced peaceful co-existence, the findings of the study show that adapting the collaboration strategy of conflict management which involves taking time to study what caused the conflicts, promoting an atmosphere of understanding between farmers and herders and allowing the conflicting parties to air their views, would discourage resentment and acrimony between the farmers and herdsmen.

Conclusion

The study examined conflict management strategies and farmers-herders' conflict in Benue State, 2011-2021. The study identified the conflict management strategies (styles) adopted by conflict parties (farmers and herdsmen) as competition (forcing) strategy and secondary actors (federal government and security agencies) as forcing strategy on a few occasions and avoidance strategy in most of the times during conflict situations in the farmers-herders' conflict in Benue State. Based on the findings, the study concludes that positive results can be elusive by using uncooperative and forceful conflict management strategies such as competition (forcing) strategy in solving conflict between farmers and herders. The study showed that conflict continues occurring despite extra force used especially by the police force. Farmers perceive herders as unkind and violent people, and thus, hold the opinion that they are responsible for every bad thing such as crop destruction, land degradation and farm encroachment and vice versa. The most appropriate conflict management strategy to be adopted at any point in time should be based on the nature of the farmers-herders conflict and the situation thereof. This situation is aggravated as a result of a lack of synergy between the federal government and Benue State government in managing the conflict. The Anti-Open Grazing law put in place by Benue State government cannot be effective without the collaboration and committed implementation by the security apparatuses/agencies controlled by the federal government. This is an indication of the adoption of an avoidance strategy of conflict management by the federal government since negligence, passivity, neutrality, inaction and lack of will-power/ignoring to uphold the rule of law in prosecuting troublemakers in the conflict as required; upon the incessant wanton destruction of lives and properties. Furthermore, a collaborative initiative can only guarantee constructive and sustainable resolution, which could be obtained by creating awareness among the community members to know the relevance of peaceful co-existence in their society, and involve people, especially the conflicting groups to find out on their own what are the causes and what are the appropriate strategies suitable to end conflict.

Recommendations

1. There should a collaborative initiative such as jointly established conflict management committees (farmers and herders' unions and associations such as the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria- MACBAN, All Farmers Association of Nigeria- AFAN and security agencies) at mitigating or ending the farmers-herders' conflicts should be encouraged always at state, district, local governments, and village/community levels in creating comprehensive awareness and compliance with the need for peaceful conflict resolutions and mutual co-existence;
2. There is a need for viable Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) on farmers-herders' conflict management, especially in the areas of awareness, education, prevention, amelioration and negotiations;
3. Government policy is important in solving conflicts between farmers and herdsmen such as Land policy which determines land acquisition and land ownership in compliance with the land tenure system, especially adhering to the provisions of the Land Use Act of 1978. The land policy must state clearly how to obtain, use and the distribution of land to all users and ensure that conflicts are managed effectively.
4. The collaboration strategy of conflict management should be adopted where all stakeholders in a particular conflict must be involved to deliberate and come up with constructive solutions which will effectively handle the concerns of conflicting groups because the conflict is based on their concerns.
5. The Anti-Open Grazing law in Benue State should be sustained and implemented to curtail the menace of unaccounted wandering of herdsmen and cattle encroaching/trespassing on farmlands leading to conflict. This will avoid competition for the available few resources of land and water because farmers and herders would make effective use of their respective areas, thus, the need for synergy between the Federal Government and Benue State in terms of the security agencies controlled by the former to see to the sincere and committed execution of the law in the state. The rule of law should prevail always in that offenders should be punished; and cattle grazing reserves should be encouraged in compliance with international standards and best practices as this will uphold modernity in cattle breeding and commercialization of the trade.

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