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ROLES OF SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNMENT IN FARMERS-HERDERS CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN KEBBI STATE, 2015-2023

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Abstract
Studies on conflict resolution have expanded the frontier of knowledge in the literature of Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS) in Nigeria, especially relating to the role of the state in conflict resolutions. Although the role played by the state in conflict resolutions has been extensively studied, the focus of most of such literature is more on national government with little attention to sub-national governments. Some of these sub-national governments have been grappling with conflicts of different magnitudes, ranging from intra and inter-communal conflicts, ethno-religious conflicts, terrorism and farmers-herders conflict, among others. They have been putting different mechanisms and strategies for conflict resolutions to the extent that some of the mechanisms and strategies have proven to be effective and some are ineffective. It is based on this that this paper assessed the role played by Kebbi State government, as one of the sub-national governments of the federation in resolving the conflict between the crop farmers and the pastoralists in five affected Local Government Areas (LGA) of the state. The conflict was presumed to have been caused by the increase in the demand of arable lands due largely to the implementation of the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) of irrigation rice production, where some grazing areas and cattle routes were said to have been converted to dried rice production. How did Kebbi State Government manage the conflict under study? This question defines the problematique of the paper, which is based on the assumption that the state government used different strategies in resolving the conflict. In answering this question however, data were generated using mixed method where both quantitative and qualitative techniques were employed. While quantitative data were generated using kobo collect digital questionnaire instrument, qualitative data were generated using in-depth interview (IDI) with purposively sampled respondents from the affected LGAs and some government officials. The quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and complemented with qualitative data in order to make the analysis more rigorous. The paper found out that the adoption of some strategies such as constitution of peace and reconciliation committee, compensation payment, resettlement of victims, mobilisation of traditional leaders, farmers and Fulani associations, among others by the Kebbi State government have been effective in resolving the conflict, but still more holistic approach is needed to sustain their effectiveness in managing the farmers-herdsmen conflict in the affected LGAs.

Keywords: *Conflict, Pastoralist, Crop-farmer, Sub-national Government & Kebbi State*

Introduction

Conflict resolution is an aspect of the framework of conflict management, which is part of the purposes of the state. Conflict of any kind has been antithetical to human progress and development. This underscores the imperative of the state to ensure conflict management in all ramifications. Owing to popular belief that conflict is endemic to human society, most of the causes of conflict are related to scarcity of resources (Madalina, 2015). This has been supported by Mohammed (2021, p. 489) that conflict between farmers and herders "… arises from competition over scarce resources, such as land and water. The inevitability of conflict in such a socio-economic life condition is apparent". As the

resources are presumably believed to be scarce and cause conflict between farming and pastoral groups, poor utilisation of the 'scarce' resources is an important point of note, as … argue that the nature of farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria goes beyond resource competition of land as an agricultural commodity (Yusuf, Ogezi & Salau, 2022). Nonetheless, the complexity of herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria has remained unabated. This is in spite of constitutional roles of the Nigeria's state to protect life and property of the citizens. Nevertheless, like other violent conflicts in the country, farmers-herders conflict has attracted the attention of different stakeholders; ranging from academic researchers to governmental and non-governmental organisations. This attraction is due to devastating effects of the conflict to food security and inter-group relations.

However, in the modern Nigeria's setting, efforts of addressing conflicts between farming and herding communities predated the 1914's amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates. This is because in 1909, colonial administration initiated the idea of setting up grazing reserves as a policy strategy for stopping herders' continued encroachment on farmlands (Mohammed, 2021). This policy led to gazetting of cattle routes in many areas especially in the northern part of the country, with the aim of prevention of herders' encroachment. Adoption of this policy continued up to post-independent period, when in 1964, the then Federal Government enacted Grazing Reserves Act (Gursory, 2020). Although this Act designated about 415 specific locations for use as grazing reserves, "Only 114 of those (designated areas) were given the grazing land status officially [sic]. Even those which were given the status were not properly protected as grazing areas" (Gursory, 2020, p. 8). This is what led to the loss of over 72% of the designated grazing reserves to other purposes unspecified by the Act.

Furthermore, the situation became worst with the enactment of the 1978 Land Use Act, which vested the power of land allocation to state and local government authorities (Mohammed, 2021a). This also "… marginalises pastoralist and makes the *Burtali,* or designated stock routes, and grazing reserves a mere policy pronouncement because neither farmers nor herdsmen respect their sanctity" (Mohammed, 2021, p. 484). This trend continued up to the return of civilian rule in 1999, where the resurgence of farmers-herders conflict was compounded by different factors. These factors comprised the upsurge of ethno-religious conflict in some states like Kaduna and Plateau, climate change resulting to desertification, poor governance in the management of inter-group relations and the Boko Haram insurgency that pushed many herdsmen away from the northeast to north-central and to some southern Nigeria's states (Gursory, 2020; Mohammed, 2021a). This is in addition to ethnic profiling of attributing herders as 'Fulani's' and farmers as 'non-Fulani's' by some literature (Centre for Democracy & Development [CDD], n.d.). Based on this, one can argue that there seems to be a strong connection between the role of the governments at both federal and state levels in land-related issues and the continual resurgence of farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria.

While Federal Government of Nigeria has been making efforts to provide a lasting solution to persistent farmers-herders conflict in the country through the proposal of rural grazing areas (RUGA) and national grazing reserves commission, some state governments have taken initiative of enacting anti-open grazing laws in order to continue marginalising pastoralist groups from grazing (Mohammed, 2021a). This has further complicated the situation in the country. In most of these states that enacted the anti-grazing law and those states that attempted to enact, conflict between farmers and herdsmen continue to create carnage and unwanted consequences. However, Kebbi State where this paper focuses is believed to have enjoyed relative peace in terms of farmers-herders clashes, but the recent eruption of conflict between crop farmers and herdsmen came after the implementation of Anchor Borrowers Programme began (ICPR, 2017). The Anchor Borrowers Programme in Kebbi State focuses on rice and wheat production, which are mostly irrigational due to the availability of the River Niger tributaries in the state. The conflict resulted in loss of lives and destruction of property from within both the two groups (NAN, 2017; Salman, 2023). While causes and impacts of the conflict have been investigated extensively, the roles played by Kebbi State government is yet to be assessed.

It is against this background that this paper assesses the role played by the State government in managing the conflict. These roles are assumed to have included direct involvement of the state government through its various agencies or employment of local authorities and traditional institution.

Specifically, direct and indirect involvements of the state government have been assumed to have yielded the following: intervention of the state government peace committee, payment of compensation to injured members of both groups, resettlement of pastoralists and reallocation of farm land to crop farmers, mobilising leadership of farmers and Fulani associations, prosecuting the actors and perpetrators in local courts and mobilisation of traditional leaders for dialogue and peace-building. However, the central objective of this paper is to assess how Kebbi State government effectively utilised these strategies to restore peace in the five affected LGAs.

The State and Conflict Resolution: Conceptual and Theoretical Discourse

Political thinkers and theorists generally have been emphatic about essence of the state, especially in conflict resolution. This is because conflict is part of the characteristic features of anarchical situation, which is only addressed through state's assertiveness in responding to its responsibilities. While traditional conflict resolution theories largely believe that mediation and negotiation are the best conflict resolution mechanisms, the problem is how mediation and negotiation should be coordinated and by who. This is where the role of the state is imperative in this regard. In discharging its function of conflict resolution, state is usually represented by government through different agencies and constituted committees of inquiry (Mohammed, 2021; Yoroms, 2020). The functions undertaken by government agencies and commissions of inquiry towards conflict resolutions are defined as role of the state, because they are the representative institutions of the state.

However, with regard to Nigerian roles in conflict resolutions, Mohammed (2021) asserts that "… committee of inquiry, such as the Presidential Peace Initiative Committee in 2002, the Federal Administrative Panel of Inquiry in 2008, the Federal Advisory Committee in 2010 and the Post Advisory Committee on Security Challenges in 2012, were set up" in order to find a lasting solution to the problem. Similarly, Yoroms (2020) argues that the processes of conflict resolution in Nigeria vary from one place to another. In spite of the variation however, the processes comprise arbitration and negotiation, which are part of the elements of dialogue for peacebuilding. Peacebuilding and conflict resolution are part of the elements of conflict management, which is a responsibility of the state (Kuna, 2006). In expatiating the efforts of government towards conflict resolutions, Yoroms, (2020, p. 53) further maintains that "Since the return to democratic/civil rule in 1999 several efforts were made towards harmonising Nigeria's national security policy such as the Emmanuel Ayoola Panel on Smalls Arms [sic], which was later mandated to work on national security strategy". Others include "The Tekina Tamuno Security Committee, the Rochas Okorocha's Nigerian Peace Forum and the Conflict Impact Assessment survey conducted by the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution" (Yoroms, 2020). The Report of the 2016 conflict assessment documents that government as an institution of the state is responsible for the protection of lives and properties, as well as the preservation of peace, order and security of all that live within the sovereign territorial jurisdictions of the state (ICPR, 2017). The Report further asserts that "The major Federal Government policy response at the return to democratic governance in 1999 was the creation of the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) in the year 2000, which represents the will and determination of government to respond to the myriads of conflict across the country" (IPCR, 2017, p. 64). With over 20 years since the creation of the institution, the contour of conflict continues to expand in terms of frequency and sophistication (Mohammed, 2021). However, both Mohammed's and Yoroms' conflict resolutions' strategies are part of the federal government national security strategies; but they fail to go beyond federal government, where sub-national governments and other stakeholders play their roles.

This is why Manu & Abdulkadir (2020) argue that processes of conflict resolution should go beyond government as a representative of the state. Strategies for peace promotion and conflict resolution should be made to include: NGOs and Civil Society Organisations' (CSOs) efforts on conflict resolutions; personal involvement of private citizens, involvement of research centres for academic research and training, activism and advocacy efforts for peacebuilding, mobilisation of religious and faith-based organisations as well as funding the activities of CSOs by government. It is on this note that Uja, Achakpa & Musa (2023) examine the role of non-governmental organisation in the prevention of one of the causes of conflict which is extremism, where women environmental programme (WEB) is focused in preventing violent extremism in Benue State. They argue that

WEB's interventionist effort in conflict prevention activities yielded some positive results, in spite of emerging challenges (Uja, et al, 2023). Hence, collaboration between government and other NGOs that focus on conflict related interventions is key in addressing the challenges.

In a related development, Abdulsalam, Olokooba, & Ifeoma (2020) examine the importance of traditional institutions in conflict resolutions. According to them:

> The roles of traditional rulers in conflict resolution includes reconciling and integrating both parties in conflicts, maintaining law and order in the communities, promoting the use of informal settlements, checks and balances in the society, managing improper communication and interaction breakdowns among their subjects, fostering communal solidarity and unity, engendering peaceful co-existence of people of different religious, ethnic and social background, dealing with pressures from external forces outsides the community that results in breeding internal pressures as well as facilitating socio-cultural bridge reconstructions in post-conflict situation (Abdulsalam et al., 2020, p. 60)

These roles of traditional rulers have been part of the elements that define the sanctity of the institution. They have vast knowledge of the values, ethics and morals of the society (Abdulsalam et al., 2020). Traditional leaders have been actively supportive in many localised conflicts, especially between farmers and herders in many states of the federation. This is why Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin (2018, p. 9) assert that "… in contexts where the state has not been able to effectively respond to localised conflicts, traditional and community leaders have been important bridges within the [sic] governance and security vacuum". These effective roles played by traditional leaders is due to their historically modernised nature as pre-colonial political machineries (Yahaya & Musa, 2019).

Theoretically speaking, this paper is anchored on Transformative-Mediation Model. Although this model is embedded in the general framework of peacekeeping in international relations (Li, 2018), it can equally be applied to explain the role of government and other stakeholders in resolving conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Kebbi State. This is because of the model's central assumption of involving third party in conflict resolution. Furthermore, the third party to be involved according to this model comprises government officials or agencies at federal, state and local government levels; non-governmental organisations, community mobilisation to include both religious and traditional leaders as well as leadership of farmers and Fulani associations (Akwara, 2018). The entire roles of these stakeholders must be coordinated by government. However, according to this theoretical model, transformative mediation of farmers-herders conflict can better be resolved using the following strategies (Li, 2018).

i. Forcing and Competing Strategy;
ii. Win-Win Strategy;
iii. Compromising Strategy; and
iv. Avoiding Strategy.

According to Li (2018), forcing and competing strategy is applied when government enforce law and order toward managing a conflict situation. This strategy defines the role of government in apprehending conflict situation by deploying security agencies to manage the conflict. This role is undertaken within the framework of coercive capacity and capability of the state. Making and enforcing peace can be accommodated under this strategy and they are important instruments in the hand of government for conflict resolution. Apart from this, Win-Win strategy is another process of conflict resolution. This is achieved through the application of personal efforts between the conflicting parties under the supervision of third party, which is mostly the state or any of its representative agencies. The "Parties (to the conflict) need to work and cooperate, as well as be willing to take full responsibility to establish a win-win solution" (Li, 2018, p. 9).

However, the win-win strategy can only be possible when it is complimented with compromising strategy as a temporary measures towards achieving win-win results. Compromising strategy implies that the conflicting parties must concession some of their grievances for the purpose of peace. This concession will lead to enduring situation of permanent peace and development. Another way of conflict resolution according to the model is what is called avoiding strategy. This strategy is adopted

when both compromising and win-win strategies fail to resolve a conflict situation. The best thing for the conflicting parties is to adopt withdrawal model. Withdrawal model is the avoidance of cause of conflict. According to Li (2018, p. 9), "When it is not the right time to deal with the problem, or when the conflict cannot be solved immediately because it requires a system change, herdsmen and farmers can choose to withdraw or to avoid the confrontation". It is within the context of the central assumption of this theoretical model that this paper assumes that management of the conflict that erupted between farmers and herders in the five affected LGAs of Kebbi State is based on the employment of state and local government peace committee, legal procedure, compensation payment, resettlement of pastoralist, reallocation of farmers, mobilisation of traditional/community leaders and engagement of leadership of farmers/pastoralist associations as conflict resolution instruments.

Research Methodology

Given the nature of the problematique examined by this paper, mixed method was used in achieving the objectives of the study. This is because to examine the contexts within which Kebbi State manifests itself in the conflict between crop farmers and pastoralists, one requires multi-dimensional sources of data. These categories of data are only obtained through the use of mixed methodology. Combined or Mixed Method as an approach to research is embedded in pragmatic philosophical foundation, which, as (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) suggests, is more applicable to social, historical and political contexts.

The data were sourced from both primary and secondary sources. While questionnaire instrument and in-depth interview (IDI) were used to generate primary data, secondary data were sourced from published documents comprising books, articles in academic journals and other secondary sources of information. The target population was determined from the list of the registered voters in the five affected LGAs. These LGAs were chosen because they were the most affected by the farmers-herdsmen conflicts after the commencement of the implementation of the ABP. The sample size of the survey was determined using 0.05% of the total number of the registered voters of the affected LGAs, which is **478,235** (Kebbi State INEC Office, 2023). That is **478,235X0.05=239** approximately **240.** Furthermore, the table below presents the sample size and sample population according to the affected LGAs.

Table 1.1: Sample Size of the Survey

S/N	*LGAs*	*Registered Voters*	*%*	*Sample Size*
1	Bagudo	110,087	23.0	55
2	Bunza	78,499	16.4	40
3	Koko-Besse	100,677	21.0	50
4	Shanga	80,588	17.0	41
5	Suru	108,384	22.6	54
Total	**5**	**478,235**	**100,0**	**240**

Source: Kebbi State INEC Office, 2023

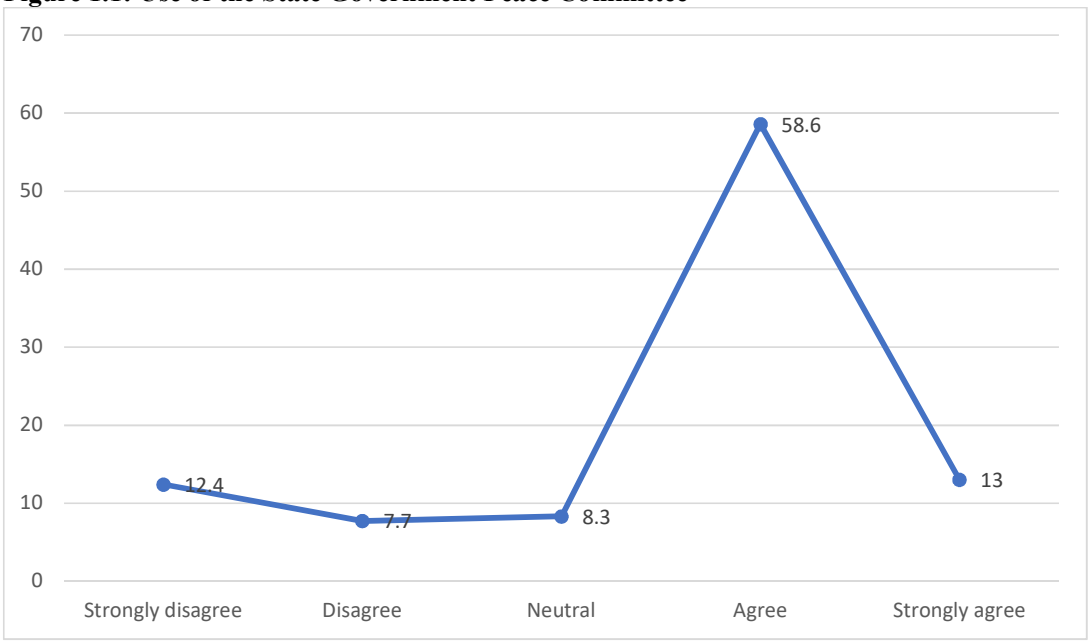
The table above presents the sample in accordance with the registered voters in the affected LGAs. As it is shown on the table Bagudo has the highest percentage of the registered voters and therefore, 55 respondents were sampled. Bunza, Koko-Besse, Shanga and Suru LGAs have 40, 50, 41 and 54 samples proportionately in proportion to their percentage registered voters of 16.4%, 21.0%, 17.0% and 22.6%. This gives the total number of 240 questionnaires digitally administered using *koboCollect.* The respondents to the questionnaires were randomly selected reflecting their gender, age, education and occupational characteristics.

For the IDI, the respondents were purposively selected among traditional leaders, community leaders as well as some leaders of farmers and herders associations. The quantitative data were interpreted] using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage. The data were triangulated with the qualitative data in the analysis.

Kebbi State Government and Resolution of the Conflict between Farmers and Herdsmen in the Five Affected LGAs: Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents and analyses the data generated from the field survey on the roles played by Kebbi State Government in resolving the conflict between crop farmers and herders in Bagudo, Bunza, Koko-Besse, Shanga and Suru LGAs of the State. However, total of 240 respondents were sampled from the five LGAs, with 86.3% of them were male and 13.7% are female. Among the 240 respondents, 7.7% were within the age bracket of 18-27 years, 28.0% were within the age bracket of 28-37 years, 28.0% were also within the age of 38-47 years, 25.0% of the respondents were within the age bracket of 48-59 years and 11.3% have fallen within the age of 60 years and above. The respondents have varied level of educational attainments. While 42.5% of them do not have western education, 23.1% possess only primary school qualification, 22.5% are holder senior secondary school certificate, 7.1% have either diploma certificate or NCE, 4.2% are holder of either degree or HND and 0.6% are holder of higher degree certificate. Furthermore, all of the respondents are occupied with either farming, shepherding or both in which 54.8% are farmers and 35.7% are pastoralist, whereas 9.5% are both farmers and pastoralist. It is on the basis of this that the respondents were asked to rate the following roles of the Kebbi State Government on managing the farmers-herders conflict in the five affected LGAs of the state.

Figure 1.1: Use of the State Government Peace Committee

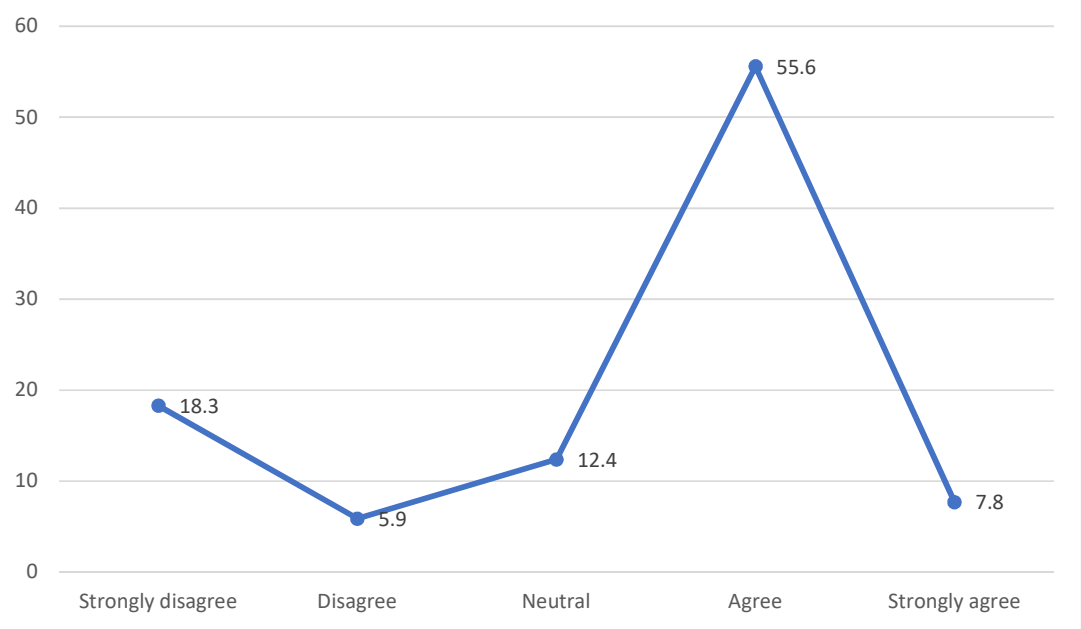


Source: Field Work, 2023

The above figure presents the respondents' rating on the use of government officials to broker peace between farming and herding groups. As it is shown, 12.4% strongly disagree with the use of government officials for conflict resolution, 7.7% only disagree, 8.3% are neutral, 58.6% agree with the use of peace committee by Kebbi State government and 13.0% strongly agree. This shows that over 70% of the respondents accept that part of the roles played by the government is sending officials to make and build peace in the conflict affected LGAs. This peace committee comprises security agents who are deployed by the government to make peace through arrest of the conflict actors and prosecution. This is validated by an informant during an interview that whenever the conflict erupted, government deployed security agents in all the nooks and crannies of the LGAs and the presence of

the security agents prevented the escalation of the conflict to other parts of the state.[3] according to Salman (2023), one of the strategies adopted by the Kebbi State government is setting up of a peace and reconciliation committee headed by the State Commissioner of Police. The Committee membership has cut across the State Director of DSS, the Commander of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, district heads of the affected LGAs, members of the State House of Assembly and other relevant stakeholders in the areas (Salman, 2023). This is supported by a statement made by an informant during one of the interview session thus: "The state government has involved all stakeholders regarding security challenges the traditional leaders, security agents, citizens and so on in order to maintain law and order between the farmers and the herdsmen"[4].

Figure 1.2: Use of the LGA Peace Committee

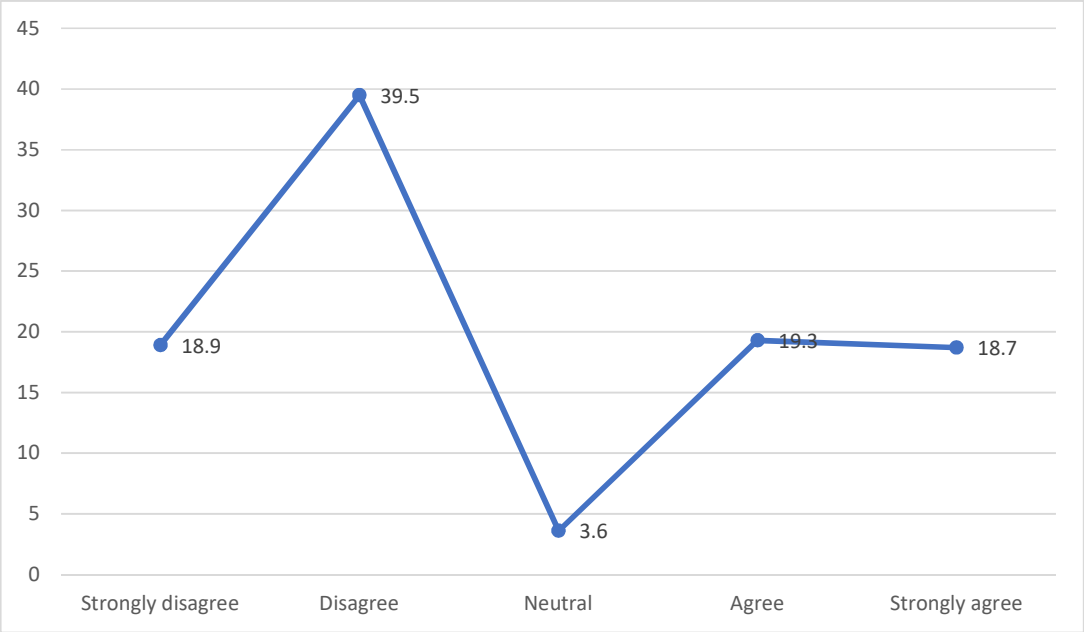


Source: Field Work, 2023

This graph presents the respondents' rating on the commitments of the LGAs toward the management of the conflict between farmers and herders in the five affected LGAs. As it has shown, 18.3% strongly disagree that the Kebbi State government uses local councils in resolving the conflict, 5.9% equally disagree with the role of local councils, 12.4% have chosen to remain neutral, 55.6% have agreed that local government councils are part of the process of peacebuilding, whereas 7.8% have strongly agreed. This implies that over 60% of the respondents have accepted that local governments affected have been part of the process of resolving the conflict between farmers and herders. In addition to this, the local government council also intervened in other areas of need that will help to restore peace in the affected communities. This was captured by NANs in 2017 during one of the conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in Suru, where the Council Chairman was reported to have promised the affected communities to provide assistance to the victims from both warring groups (NAN, 2017). He also promised to embark on massive awareness campaign in order to sensitise and educate both the farmers and the herdsmen on the need to avoid taking laws into their hands (NAN, 2017).

Figure 1.3: Use of Local Courts to Prosecute Perpetrators & Actors

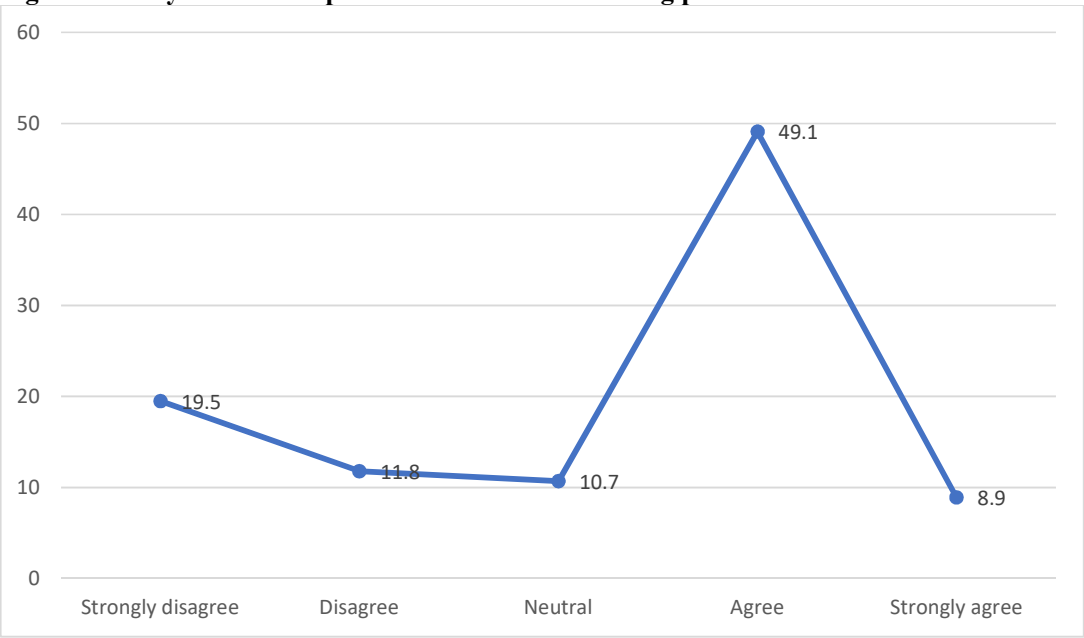
[3] This statement was made by one of the informant during an interview session in Raha, Bunza LGA of Kebbi State on 27th November, 2023.
[4] Interviewee's statement; ibid



Source: Field Work, 2023

Furthermore, in the process of making peace in the affected areas, some arrests have been made by the security agencies and the survey wanted to know whether it was part of the government's efforts to prosecute the conflict perpetrators in local courts or not. The data presented at the above figure have shown that about 18.9% strongly have not agreed that government has used local courts to prosecute perpetrators of the conflict, 39.5 % also have not agreed, and 3.6% have remained neutral. Only 19.3% and 18.7% have respectively accepted that government has used local courts in the prosecution of the perpetrators. This has indicated that government is reluctant in punishing the arrested perpetrators of the conflict, which will continue trigger reprisal attacks in future. In terms of arrest, government is always committed to that where in 2017, arrest of 10 suspects in connection to the eruption of conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Bakoshi Community of Suru LGA (NAN, 2017). However, there was hardly reported prosecution of the arrested suspects.

Figure 1.4: Payment of compensation to both the warring parties

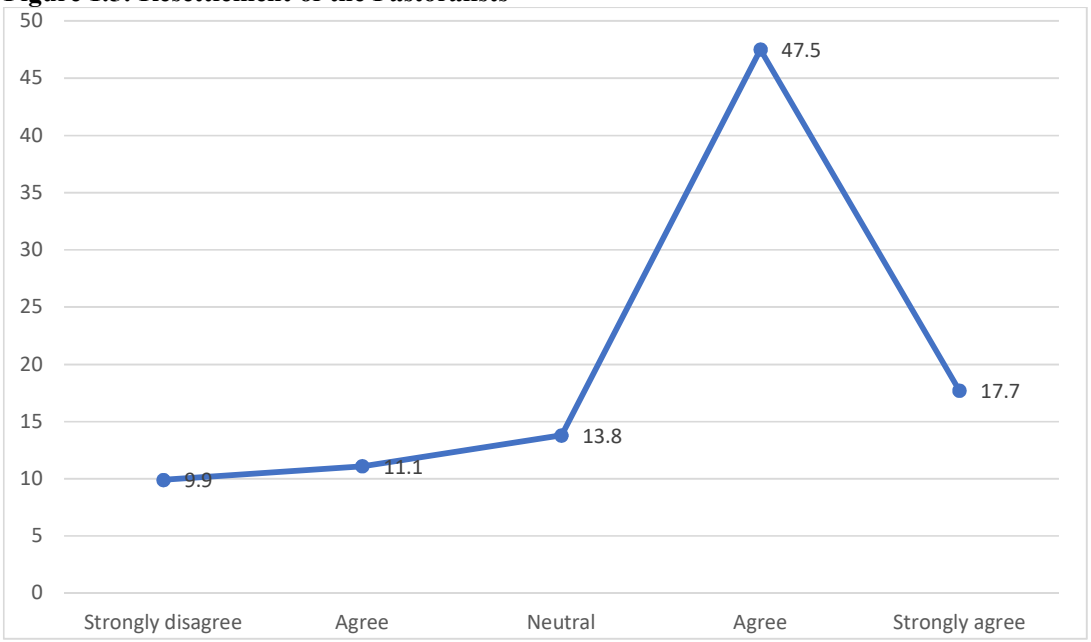


Source: Field Work, 2023

In the above diagram, the respondents were asked to ascertain or validate payment of compensation as part of commitments to resolving the conflict by the state government. As the rating has shown, 19.5% have strongly disagreed that government has paid compensation to the victims of the conflict from the two warring parties, 11.8% also have disagreed and 10.7% were neutral, meaning that they were not aware. Furthermore, the results have shown that 49.1% have agreed that government has paid compensation to the victims and 8.9% have emphatically agreed with compensation payment. This has indicated that only about 31% were negative about the payment of compensation, while about 60% were positive. However, the positivity of compensation payment is supported by literature where it is argues that the Kebbi State Governor:

> Who donated N4m to the families of the two deceased people, also donated N5m to the remaining eight people that sustained injuries in Suru, while in Besse, where two people were missing and one person was killed, the governor donated N2m to the family of the deceased. And N2m was also given to the remaining people that sustained injuries during the crisis in the two areas (Salman, 2023, p. 6).

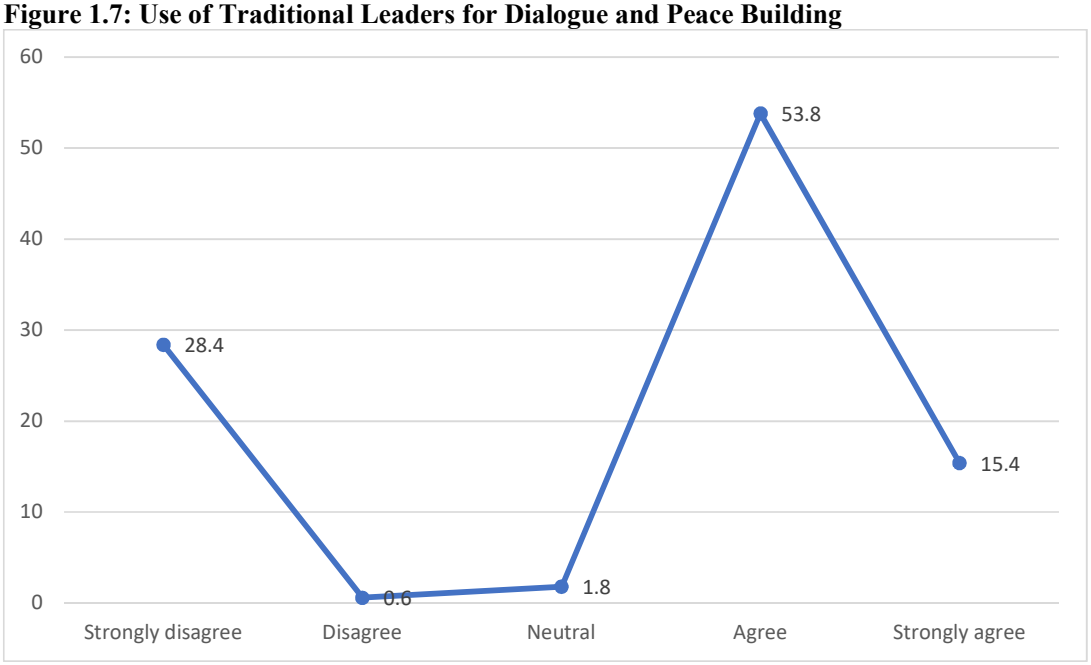
Figure 1.5: Resettlement of the Pastoralists



Source: Field Work, 2023

Apart from compensation for the victims, government is also committed to resettlement as a strategy of conflict resolution. However, the above diagram presents respondents' rating about the government's resettlement efforts as part of the conflict resolution processes. As it has been shown, 9.9% have strongly disagreed that some herdsmen have been resettled, 11.1% have also disagreed with the resettlement initiative of the government, 13.8% have remained mute about the resettlement issue, 47.5% have accepted that there was a resettlement initiative by the government and 17.7% have strongly agreed with the Kebbi State government's resettlement commitment. This has shown that over 65% of the respondents have agreed with the issue of the government resettlement commitment. However, literature also affirms the commitment of government in resettlement drive as part of the efforts in resolving the conflict. It is reported that "The governor directed the immediate resettlement of the dispersed herdsmen with a promise to provide basic amenities to the new settlement" (NAN, 2017). Similarly, the resettlement effort is aimed at restoring permanent peace and preventing future occurrence of the conflict (Salman, 2023). The resettlement process involves traditional rulers, who are already made part of the peace reconciliation committee at both state and local government levels (Salman, 2023). District heads and village heads have part of this process for dialogue and peace building as presented on the diagram bellow.

Figure 1.7: Use of Traditional Leaders for Dialogue and Peace Building

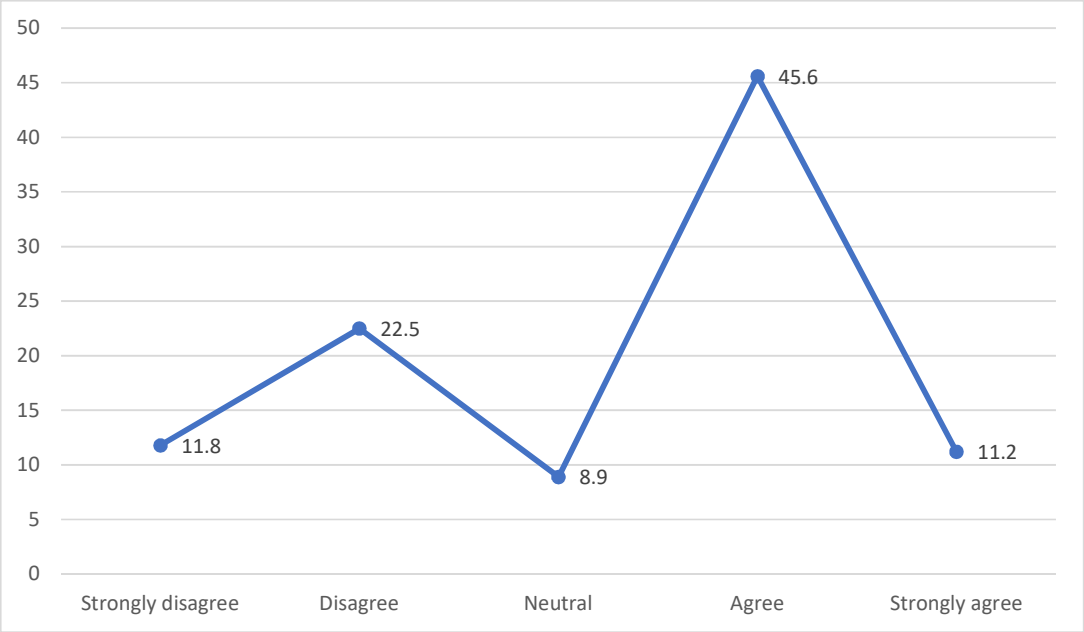


Source: Field Work, 2023

The above diagram presents respondents' rating on the mobilisation of traditional institution for conflict resolution. As it can be seen, 28.4% have strongly disagreed that traditional rulers have been part of the peace process, 0.6% have also disagreed with their roles, 1.8% have remained neutral, 53.8% have agreed that traditional leaders have been mobilised for dialogue and peace building and 15.4% have equally strongly agreed with their involvement in resolving conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in the affected LGAs. This has shown that traditional rulers have been part of the state's process of conflict resolution as accepted by about 70% of the respondents. This has been corroborated by Abdulsalam et al. (2020) that "The roles of traditional rulers in conflict resolution includes reconciling and integrating both parties in conflicts, maintainng law and order in their communities and promoting the use of informal settlement mechanisms [authours' emphasis is added]". An informant also argues that "Whenever there is any dispute between the issue is immediately reported to the nearest traditional leader who intervenes and resolve the case amicably. However he reported to the superior leader for prompt action in order to reconcile the two opposing sides".[5] Traditional rulers are among the stakeholders that have been part of the process of conflict resolution. Other stakeholders include the farmers and miyatti Allah associations, which the diagram below presents their roles.

[5] Interview conducted at Shanga LGA on 17th November, 2023.

Figure 1.8: Use of Officials of the Crop Farmers & Miyatti Allah Associations



Source: Field Work, 2023

The diagram above presents respondents' rating on whether the state government mobilises the officials of the groups' associations. As it has been indicated, 11.8% have strongly disagreed on the use of the associations for peace building and conflict resolution, 22.5% have also disagreed, 8.9% are neutral, 45.6% have agreed with the use of the association and 11.2% have strongly agreed also. This has shown that over 56% of the respondent have accepted that Kebbi State government mobilises the groups' associations in the resolution of the conflict. It is on this commitment that the state government promised to bring an end to the conflict between farmers and herdsmen by mobilising resources to round-table dialogue involving security agencies and other relevant stakeholders (Salman, 2023).

Conclusion

This paper is based on assessment of the roles of Kebbi State government in resolving farmers-herdsmen conflict in five of the affected LGAs within the period under study. The paper discovered that the state government prompt interventions using multi-strategic approach assisted in quick apprehension of the situation. This multi-strategic approach included constitution of peace and reconciliation committee comprising security agents, traditional and community leaders as well as government officials has, to some extent, proven effective. Its effectiveness was due to some of the measures taken by the Committee, which included visiting the conflict areas for on the spot assessment of the damages, interacting with the leadership of the two groups' associations, compensating and resettling the victims of the conflict and directing arrest of some of the perpetrators, among other measures. However, all these measures seem to be temporary that may not lead to sustainable peace and harmony between the two occupational groups.

Recommendations

To sustain the peace in the state, this paper recommends that more holistic approach needs to be taken by the government that ensures resolving the remote causes of the conflict for more prolonged inter-group relations. The holistic approach must take all historical factors that are related to land tenure system and the issue of gazetted cattle routes into consideration. Also the arrested instigators or perpetrators of the conflict should be prosecuted to serve as deterrence to other criminals in future.

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