JOURNAL OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE
ISSN Print: 2992-2763 – ISSN Online: 2992-4618 | Vol. 2, Issue 2, No. 1 / June 2024
https://www.jopd.com.ng

THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY GOVERNMENT TOWARDS CURTAILING HERDERS-FARMERS CONFLICTS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA.

BY

LUKA Ruth Caleb (PhD)
lukaruth81@gmail.com,
+2348032905189
Department of Political Science,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
Nasarawa State University, Keffi Nigeria
&
Fidelia Zachariah Piwuna
ppiwuna@gmail.com
08036218676
General Studies Department
Plateau State Polytechnic
Barkin Ladi

ABSTRACT
The impact of herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. The incidents are recurring and the effects on human lives and livelihoods are worrisome. The study is aimed at examining the efforts made and the challenges encountered by Oyo State Government in curtailing Herders-farmers conflict. Structural conflict theory was adopted in this study. Data were collected through primary research instruments such as questionnaire and interview. Results from these sources were supplemented with information from the extant literature, including newspapers, magazines, reports, and official documents. Findings show that a number of steps have been taken by the government to combat herders-farmers conflict in the state such as the use of Amotekun and conventional security outfits to mitigate the conflict, banning of open grazing in the state has equally been done in order to minimize the conflict between farmers and herders. However, despite these measures, herders-farmers conflicts still persist. The study finding also revealed that the challenges confronted by government in combating herders-farmers conflicts in Oyo State include: institutional failures, corruption and politics of the belly, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, lack of coordination, policy deficiencies and lack of political will. As a way of recommendation, State Houses of Assembly seeking to regulate the conduct of farmers and herders should promulgate laws that give recognition to human beings as persons. All legislation must seek to foster peaceful coexistence and help in harnessing Nigeria's economic and socio-cultural potential. While doing this, efforts should be made towards modeling best practices of pastoral-farmer relations as evident in countries such as Chad, Ethiopia and Niger, where the existence of institutionalized and functional mechanisms for pre-empting and resolving conflicts between farmers and pastoralists enable them to live in peace.
Keywords: Conflict, Herders, Farmers, Economic Development, Food Security

Introduction

The farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria has demonstrated huge possibility of worsening the spate of insecurity and food crisis where most of the conflicts take place, with reverberating implications for economic development nationwide. In response to this problem, the Federal Government of Nigeria created grazing reserves across Bauchi, Katsina States, and in Abuja,

which is designed to cater for about 15 million herders. The plan equally involved demarcating 175,000 hectares of grazing land, construction of settlements for herders, and construction of veterinary service centers at the cost of $247 million. The Federal Government equally demarcated a 1,400 km livestock route spanning from Sokoto State to Oyo State as well as additional route from Adamawa to Calabar (Adeoye, 2017).

As a multi-ethnic entity, the impact of herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. The incidents are recurring and the effects on human lives and livelihoods are worrisome. Report has it that since 2016, more than 11,600 lives have been lost as a result of the farmer- herder conflicts. Also nothing less than 162,000 people have been displaced in the middle belt region where the conflict is mostly concentrated. Many farmers and herders have lost their homes and lives as well, while experiencing dwindling productivity in crop production and herds (Nweze, 2020). In contemporary Nigeria, pressure on land has basically made herders and farmers involved in more violent conflicts.

There have been efforts by past and present government administrations to curb the menace occasioned by the farmer-herder conflict. Before the collapse of the first republic, the government's Grazing Reserve Act of 1964 provided grazing areas and paths for the passage of livestock, but after 1966, the paths became moribund and overtaken by other anthropogenic activities (Relief Web, 2018). More recently, bills have been presented by lawmakers such as the National Grazing Routes and Reserve Bill 2012 and the National Grazing Reserve Bill 2016 which sought to establish new grazing reserves and routes in each State of the federation; however, these bills have been unsuccessful. This is largely due to criticisms and distrust of the outcomes by different regions. For instance, southern leaders and groups fear that the bill is an attempt to seize power and colonize the region. Similarly, in mid-2019, Nigeria's Executive wing proposed to establish Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlements all over the country in a bid to check the conflicts and improve agricultural productivity. The RUGA programme sought to settle migrant pastoral families and other animal farmers in an organized place with provision of necessary and adequate social amenities (Tersoo, 2019). This too, met a dead end and was eventually shelved as different groups accused the process as a plot to "Fulanize" the country.

In the most recent time, the farmers-herdsmen conflict has spread to the southwest part of Nigeria and has assumed a frightening proportion in terms of its frequency, intensity, prevalence and magnitude. In some instances, Yoruba farmers have been abducted in their farm settlements.

Oyo State is suffering, in alarming proportions, from the jeopardy posed by the Fulani Herdsmen in the different locations they migrate to for purposes of grazing their cattle. This seems to have made herders-farmers conflict almost an unending conflict in the state. In an attempt to overcome this menace, the government of Oyo State collaborated with other states government in the South-West region to established what is known as "Amotekun" security outfit to deal with insecurity affecting them. Specifically, Oyo state adopted the creation of conventional outfits as the strategy in addressing herders-farmers in the state. Therefore, it is against this background that this study examines herders-farmers conflict with particular reference to its implications for economic development in Oyo State.

Research Questions

i. What are the efforts made by Oyo State Government to curtail the herders-farmers conflicts to improve economic development in the state?
ii. What are the challenges confronted by government of Oyo state in combating herders- farmers conflicts?

Objectives of the Study

i. To examine the efforts of Oyo State government to curtail herders-farmers conflicts to improve economic development in the state;
ii. To identify the challenges confronted by government of Oyo State in combating herders-farmers conflicts.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Herder

At this juncture, herders are defined, in this study, as those that rear their livestock, especially cattle by taking them from one place to another in search of pastures. Herders, in this study, are comprised of mainly Fulanis who rear their livestock in the southern part of Nigeria where grasslands abound. Herders are usually nomadic or semi-nomadic in nature. Their basic means of livelihood is raising of livestock. Herders largely move with their herds from one location to another in search of fresh water and pasture. Herders move with weapons such as machetes, daggars, and arrows in order to protect their livestock.

Farmer

In developed nations, a farmer is usually defined as someone with an ownership interest in crops or livestock, and who provides land or management in their production. Those who provide only labour are most often called farmhands. Alternatively, growers who manage farmland for an absentee landowner, sharing the harvest (or its profits) are known as sharecroppers or share farmers. In the context of developing nations or pre-industrial cultures, most farmers practice meager subsistence agriculture - a simple organic farming system employing crop rotation, seed saving, slash and burn, or other techniques to maximize efficiency while meeting the needs of the household or community. In a subsistence economy, farm products might be either consumed by the farmer's family or by the community.

Farmers, in this study, are defined as those that are involved in sedentary farming, and who specialize in crop production. Farmers are the land-owners, who are also confined to a specific portion of land for them to be able to engage in agricultural production, and improve their livelihoods. They are largely from the southern part of the country, and it is possible that their farming activities may have encroached upon the grazing routes. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, farmers are individuals that are crop farmers, peasant farmers or subsistence farmers.

Conflict

According to Marian C. 2019, conflict does not have a universally acceptable definition, which shows that many scholars have defined the concept in diverse ways to reflect their perceptions of issues as well as their academic orientations. That aside, conflict has been defined as disagreement or friction that take place in a group, especially when the belief of a member or some members of the group runs contrary to the beliefs or actions of other members of the group. From this perspective, a conflict is defined as presence of discords among members of a group, and this may arise when the interests of some parties within the group pose threats to common interests of other members of the group. The foregoing definition of conflict is vital to this study because it shows that conflict usually arise when there are diverse parties, especially when their interest of, at least, one of the parties threatens the interests of other parties. Nevertheless, the definition of conflict did not adequately capture the diametrically opposed differences that have characterized herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria, over the years.

Conflict is equally defined as a process where views or opinions of people whether imaginary or real led to turmoil and disagreements in a country. Conflicts occur in layers. The first layer in conflict contains disagreements between or among diverse parties to a conflict, while the second layer contains differences in viewpoints, values, interests and interpersonal differences that occur in a country. Conflict is a process because it largely commences by a party which views another party as obstructing the achievement of its interests. This brings about competition, compromising, collaborating and voiding. Conflict is multidimensional and an inevitable path of life. Given the foregoing, it is vital to assert that conflict is a process that is crucial to the life of man in a society, and this position is necessary for our understanding of the fluidity associated with herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria (Chand, 2015).

Economic Development

Feldman, Hadjimichal, Kemeny and Lanahan (2014) defined economic development as the establishment and reinforcement of capabilities that increase the abilities of economic actors in a country. The economic actors may be firms, industries or individuals, but in a resource-based economy, development may be hampered by natural endowments. This is contrasted with what is obtainable in a contemporary knowledge-based economy that largely relies on skills that are developed over a period of time. The authors defined economic development as the opportunity to increase skills or abilities that permit them to make significant contributions to the state's economy. This shows that economic development allows larger percentage of individuals to participate in the society as well as the economy, while at the same time, giving them the opportunity to articulate new ideas which could be disseminated as utilised for improvement in the economy of a state. Nevertheless, the study did not examine the related factors like the structure of a country's economy and level of participation of the people in economic production which can influence economic development, especially in developing economies.

Economic development in a country is measured as Gross National Income (GNI) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP), life expectancy, literacy level, infant mortality rate, Poverty Gap Index, Income Gap Ratio, Human Development Index (HDI), life expectancy at birth, mean years of schooling for people aged 25 years, projected years of schooling for children years of entering school, Gender Inequality Index (GII), Gross National Happiness, economic self-reliance, environmental conservation, cultural preservation and promotion, and good governance (Salami, Tilakasiri & Ahmed, 2021). The foregoing is important in measuring economic development. However, the foregoing indices for measuring economic development do not adequately capture economic development within the context of herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Structural Conflict Theory

Structural conflict theory originated from the work of Marx (1818-1883). Marx who is the proponent of the structural conflict theory was a victim of marginalization due to his revolutionary ideas and the misery of his alienation as seen through his two radical most famous works: The Capital and Communist Manifesto (Charles, 2005). Marx's conflict ideology is "an analysis of inequality under capitalism and how to change it through confrontation" (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2014). They argued that in capitalism, there is an inherent conflict of interests between two opposing classes. Material resources remain the most trigger of conflicts between two opposing groups.

As suggested by Karl Marx, conflict theory claims society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. The idea, also embraced and developed by other authors, has been used to explain a wide range of social phenomenon.

However, the basic tenet of the theory is that two opposing groups in the society always struggle for limited or scarce resources. Each group competes to attain or acquire more resources and owing to its scarcity, competition in form of struggle becomes inevitable between them. As the competition continues, each group assumes selfish, thus being a barrier to the progress of the other in accessing the resources. The land resources (such as farm lands, crops, grass/ pasture, fresh water etc.) are scarce in Nigeria and needed by both farmers and herdsmen for sustenance of their various sources of livelihood. Conflict, however, would not only occur between herders and farmers as both strive with another in pursuit of these resources; but as either of the groups tries to intrude or exploit another's already secured and long acquired resources. Conflict would likely arise when farmers who are in need of arable farm lands encroach into grazing reserves or criminals in the host communities try to steal cattle for economic gains (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2014).

Herders-farmers conflicts in Oyo State arise because of inequality in the sharing of scarce resources in Nigeria, especially land resources by bourgeoisies. Inequalities in the distribution of resources in Nigeria are largely responsible for challenges confronting economic development in Oyo State, especially in the area of agricultural production. This shows that banditry, kidnapping, herders-farmers conflicts in the state are caused by inequalities arising from the division of the state into the "haves", who are mainly top government officials and the "have-nots", who are mainly crop farmers and herders. The "have-nots" are the major victims of herders-farmers conflict because they do not significantly enjoy the paraphernalia of security services in the state.

Those that occupy the government or the political class as well as others within the bourgeoisies circle are adequately protected with the state security architecture. The Governors, Deputy Governors, and top Public Servants in Oyo State are all adequately protected by government security structure. Those who are not adequately protected by the government use their wealth generated from exploitation to employ private security guards to protect them. On the contrary, crop farmers and herders live in remote villages where they are prone to attacks.

Since individuals and groups work very hard to protect the social structure that are of benefit to them, some of the elites who are highly placed, and who benefit from the underground economic benefits associated with herders-farmers conflict to continue. Other individuals in the government whose ethnic nationalities are involved in the conflict may not like to take decisive actions aimed at resolving the conflict because of whatever benefits they hope to derive from it. Conflict theory by Marx Weber is also relevant to this study because it has exposed the intra-class rivalries inherent in the bourgeoisies' class in the state, which has negatively affected economic development in the state.

Empirical Review

Responses of Government in Combating Herders-Farmers Conflicts in Oyo State

Blench (2010) in research titled The Expansion and Adaption of Fulbe Pastoralism to Sub humid and Humid Conditions in Nigeria conducted in Kebbi and Plateau States used conflict theory and questionnaire as instrument for data collection, found that most of the conflicts are settled directly between the two parties. If not unresolved, it is usually carried to a meeting between the Ardo (Head of the Herders) and the Village Head of the farmers. In rare cases, it would then be taken to the District Heads. The last resort, according to Blench, is to report to the police, a practice that is more prevalent amongst the farmers. He further explained that herders declined to go to the police for conflict resolution because they are always made scapegoats. It is salient to state that the increasing competition for scarce quality land and resources between the two groups provides the basis for the recurring violence that takes place between farmers and herders. It was recommended that periodic consultations take place amongst the police, statutory agencies, community leadership and the stakeholders in

having a holistic understanding of the underlying issues of the conflict in order to provide an effective means of resolving those conflicts before they snowball into a major crisis. The gap here is that responses of government in combating herders-farmers conflicts for better economic development in Oyo state were not captured.

Alexandra and Ugwu (2017) studied herdsmen and farmers conflicts in Nigeria: the implications for social work practice. Structural functionalism and conflict theories were employed as theoretical framework. The study adopted descriptive research design with in-dept review of literatures. The study also made use of secondary data which include news-papers and journal publications. It was found that the involvement of professional social workers in social work intervention in solving social problems in Nigeria is almost non-existent and the result is that non -professional social workers are more in the field. Thus, there should be more training of professional social workers and involvement of professional social workers in solving the problem of herdsmen and farmers conflicts in Nigeria. There should be increase in roles that social workers should play in efforts to bring about solutions to herdsmen and farmers conflicts in Nigeria. Even though there is need for increase collaboration between professional social workers and other non professionals, social workers should take the lead as members of the team. However, the study did not examine the response of government in combating herders-farmers conflicts for better economic development in Oyo State, which the focus of this study.

Williams (2018) wrote on Herdsmen and Farmers Conflict in Nigeria: Another Dimension of Insecurity. The objective of the study was to understanding the rationale and how specific perennial conflicts between herdsmen and famers in Nigeria are being resolved before 2019 election in Nigeria to enable the people to resume normal life. The study critically examined the perspectives of the disputants and the policy adopted by Federal and some State Governments to resolve it. The study collected data from both primary and secondary sources. And the technique of "content analysis" was used in analyzing the data. It was found that the conflicts created tension not only in areas where there was direct confrontation between the disputants but the conflicts terrorized every community and put them on alert to ensure that both short term and long solution was provided to return the State to a violent free community.

However, the study did not examine the response of government in combating herders-farmers conflicts for better economic development in Oyo State, which the focus of this study.

Challenges Confronted by Government in Combating Herders-Farmers Conflicts in Oyo State

Odoh and Chilaka (2012) studied climate change and conflict in Nigeria using theoretical and empirical evidence of the conflict between herders and farmers in northern Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to examine the theoretical and empirical relationship between climate change and conflict in Nigeria. The study was built around the eco-violence theory, which linked herders-farmers conflict in the north to scarcity of land resources. Data for the study was collected from secondary source and analysed using content analysis method. It was found out that drought and desertification brought about by scarcity of resources in northern Nigeria, which has been the major driver of herders-farmers conflict. This has made most of the Fulani herders to wander out of their area to other places in search of pastures. Among other things, it was recommended that Nigeria should invest more on climate change and desert encroachment, which would ultimately reduce conflict between herders and farmers. However, the study did not identify the challenges confronted by government in combating herders-farmers conflicts in enhancing economic development in Oyo State, which is the focus of this study.

Amusan, Abegunde and Akinyemi (2017) studied climate change, pastoral migration, resource governance and security focusing on the Grazing Bill solution. The purpose of the study was to determine the cause of herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria with a view to proffering solutions to the problem. Data for the study were collected largely from secondary source and analysed using content analysis method. It was found that the principles of federation could be adopted in solving the problem of herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria. After analysing the proposed Grazing Bill for managing herders-farmers conflict, it was recommended that any measure which could hamper the diversity of Nigerian could worsen the conflict. Nevertheless, the study did not identify the challenges confronted by government in combating herders-farmers conflicts in enhancing economic development in Oyo State, which is the focus of this study.

Oberiri and Bahiyah (2020) studied Nigeria: Conflict Victims' Assessment and Narratives on the Reportage of Herdsmen-Farmers Conflict. The study attempts to understand the conflict victims' assessment and narratives on the reportage of herdsmen-farmers conflict in Nigeria. Sixty (60) participants were interviewed from three (3) large communities in the North Central region of Nigeria. There is a prevailing view that the herdsmen and farmers conflict has not been given prominence by conventional media in Nigeria and the reportage of the conflict often disappear once the clashes subdue. The study considers conflict victims' assessment on the objectivity, depth and outcome of media coverage of the conflict. It was found that Nigerian media do not report actual narratives of conflict victims, as reporters often rely on second hand stories and do not present themselves at the locations to gather news. Conflict victims, hence, claim that the Nigerian media suffers from lack of objectivity and high sensationalism. They also found that excessive use of negative language, which often indicates blame game, contributes to the escalation of the conflict. This calls for an urgent need for socially responsible journalists in Nigeria who promote messages of reconciliation. What are missing in the study are the challenges confronted by government in combating herders-farmers conflicts in enhancing economic development in Oyo State, which is one of the objectives of this study.

Methodology

The research design adopted in this study is descriptive research design The use of descriptive research design, in this study, involves data collection and data analysis on past conflicts between herders and farmers and its effects on economic development in Oyo State with a view to understanding their previous and current efforts in combating herders-farmers conflicts for better economic development of Oyo State, while at the same time making predictions for the future. The population of the study comprises of Heads, Directors, Area Commanders, Divisional Crime Officers, Divisional Police Officers and Traditional rulers, from selected LGAs in the three (3) senatorial districts in Oyo State. These local government areas are: Ibarapa-North and Ibarapa-Central local government areas in Oyo South Senatorial District; Iseyin and Ogbomoso South local government areas in Oyo North Senatorial District and Afijio and Egbeda local government areas in Oyo Central Senatorial District. The foregoing local governments are selected because the people of the area are mainly farmers whose farming activities and economic wellbeing have been largely affected by herders-farmers conflicts. The Amotekun Conventional Security Outfit, Department of Rural Development, State Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, Oyo State chapter (MACBAN), registered crops farmers and registered market sellers in the LGAs under study also constitute part of the population of the study.

These organisations are selected because they are directly involved in issues relating to herders-farmers conflicts in Oyo State at policy-making and operational levels. Therefore,

the target population of this study stood at eight thousand, seven hundred and seventy - two (8772) persons, the sample size representative of the target population in this study is 367. It is determined based on the Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table which is the same as using the Krejcie and Morgans method of calculating sample size. This study adopted purposive sampling technique for the interview. The technique allowed the researcher to choose the sample on the basis of some predetermined characteristics such as deep knowledge of the issue under study. Simple Radom Technique was applied for questionnaire. In tandem with the research problems identified, the method of data collection premised on both primary and secondary methods of data collections. The rationale behind this is that the use of one source of data won't be adequate for the research.

The study used 5-point Likert scale questionnaire for its investigation making provisions to tick options that are relevant to their opinion. These options were Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, Disagree and Undecided. This open-ended questionnaire technique allowed the respondent to express his/her opinion on issues in relation to the research problem. The study also adopted in-depth interview method because it permit the researcher in generating data from only those with expert knowledge on issues relating to herders-farmers conflicts and economic development in Oyo State. Seven (7) respondents were purposively selected. The total numbers of staff/members which is Seven (7) and is part of the sampled population, the secondary sources that were used in this study included data that were collected from textbooks, journals, articles in magazines and periodicals. In the course of the research, the researcher consulted the internet too on herder-farmers conflicts and economic development in Oyo state, which has been a source of secondary data since the emergence of information and communication technologies.

Data from questionnaires were analyzed using the statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 23.0. As a descriptive statistical tool, it was used to analyze the socio-demographic factors of respondents and responses on the research questions. Data from in-depth interview were analysed base on the narrative of the interviewees using Braun and Clarke (2006) step by step process of the thematic analysis. The data were transcribed, read and reviewed.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

A total number of three hundred and sixty – seven (367) copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents that cut cross staff and officials of Police Force Area Commands and Divisional Head Quarters within the Local Governments areas under study, the Amotekun Conventional Security Outfit, Department of Rural Development, State Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Traditional Rulers in the LGAs under study, Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), Oyo State chapter and registered crops farmers in the LGAs under study. However, three hundred and fifty - three (353) copies of questionnaire were filled and retrieved. Thus 353 completed and returned copies of questionnaire which accounted for 96% were used to present and analyze data for the study.

Table One (1) Responses made by Oyo State Government in curtailing the herders-farmer's conflicts

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Amotekun Security Outfit	92	26
The use of Traditional Rulers	57	16
The use of Police	53	15
The use of Court	11	3
Famers associations	24	7

Miyetti Cattle Association	29	9
Government committees	41	12
Banning of open grazing	42	12
Total	**353**	**100%**

Source: Field Work, January (2024).

Result from Table one above indicates that 92 (26%) of the respondents acknowledge the use of Amotekun Security Outfit in the study area as part of the responses made by Oyo State Government in curtailing the herders-farmers conflicts. 57 (16%) of the respondents attest to the involvement of traditional rulers in conflict management and resolution in the area. This was followed by police 53 (15%), banning of open grazing 41 (12%), government committees 42 (12%), Miyetti Breeder cattle association 29 (9%), farmer associations 24 (7%) and court 11 (3%). From the result, the involvement of the courts, farmer associations and Miyetti Allah Breeders Cattle Association seems to be very minimal as indicated by respondents. It was found out that both farmers and herdsmen believe more in the informal means of conflict resolution.

The data revealed that fifty-seven (16%) of the respondents narrated that they preferred the local community leaders to resolve conflicts to reporting to the police. The respondents from both farmers and herders categories expressed that they believe more in the informal mechanism since the chiefs serve as the gatekeepers of the community and would expeditiously and judiciously resolve issues that are brought before them. One of the interviewees put this point in a succinct narrative when he said: "We hardly involve the police in this conflict. Anytime cattle eat things on the farm, the owner of the farm affected and the Fulani who is caught will all go the village Chief (Baale) and his elders who will help us settle the dispute…(Interview with P1, Jue - 2023)".

The above response and analysis correspond with findings of Aliyu (2015) where he submitted that traditional institutions seem to be more result-oriented in their conflict resolution efforts. A Katsina State study of the institutions involved in the resolution of herdsmen-farmers conflict, traditional rulers and their institutions were ranked highest in terms of influence and result. However, the albatross of the traditional institutions is that they only serve in advisory roles to the government and its apparatuses.

In stemming the tide of the conflict, there has been a plethora of methods and strategies that have been articulated by scholars. In agreement with respondents who favoured the use of traditional rules in resolving the herders-farmers' conflict, Gyong (1998) stated that the traditional method of conflict management before the advent of colonialism in Africa was better than the present formal strategies. According to him, the focus was to remove the cause of the dispute and reconcile the two parties in such a way as to restore the social structure of the society to its state of equilibrium. That settlement of conflict was usually done in a "village square" under the leadership of a team of elders representing various clans, who amicably settle and reconcile the parties involved.

However, Participant 7 response is in tandem with questionnaire analysis of responses on the use of police. She explains that:

> The utilization of policing of farmer- herders conflict entails area surveillance of the borders and deployment of station ground forces at strategic positions along the border of Nigeria and her neighbouring countries to control the movement along the border. Another major acts of policing and control is the mopping up of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). Policing and Control was also carried through the creation and empowerment of local forces for security such as Amotekun security corp in south west in general and more specifically Oyo State (Interview with P7 on Friday 11th January, 2023).

She went further to say:

> Police set four roadblocks and each roadblock was guarded by two armed police men and two members of the village council, who were responsible to make sure that no one was allowed to leave or enter the village. When it was necessary for anyone to enter or leave the village, she/he was required to fill in a logbook and explain where she/he was going, for how long was she/he going to stay and the purpose of the visit in or outside the village. The operation lasted for seven days and after seven days all activities in the village resumed to normal. Police left the village assuming the conflict was over. The fighting between farmers and herdsmen kept occurring and every time when the fight occurred, the police were brought in. Accordingly, it was realized that the use of police approach was not a reliable solution to the existing conflict (Interview with P7 on Friday 11th January, 2023).

Despite the recurring conflict between the farmers and herders in postcolonial Nigeria, Adebayo and Olaniyi (2008) argued that traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution are still relevant, useful and efficient in contemporary society because both farmers and pastoralists are not opposed to the issue of conflict arbitration. The desire for sustaining relationships, the speed of the dispensation of justice, and the less bureaucratic nature of the traditional mechanism resolution of conflict appear to be the major drivers that informed farmers and pastoralists' greater preference for informal authority to formal authority. This preference might not be unconnected with the understanding that reporting conflicts to formal authority like either the police or courts of law worsens the already tenuous relationship between the disputants; and lengthens the process and period for resolving the conflict, with a huge cost to the disputants.

Research Question Two: What are the challenges confronted by government of Oyo state in combating herders-farmers conflicts?

Challenges confronted by government of Oyo state in combating herders-farmers conflicts

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Policy Deficiencies	31	9
Proliferation of arms	68	19
Corruption & belly politics	**77**	22
Lack of coordination	56	16
Violent nature of approach	20	6
Lack of political will	89	25
Inadequate capacity	12	3
Total	**353**	**100%**

Source: Field Work, January (2024).

Table Two above present the challenges confronted by government of Oyo state in combating herders-farmers conflicts; from the data supplied above, lack of political will constitute the majority on the list of challenges with 89 (25%), followed by corruption and politics of the belly accounting for 77 (22%). Furthermore, 68 (19%) indicated proliferation of small arms and light weapons, 56 (16%) affirmed to lack of coordination in settling the herdsmen and the villages, 31 (9%) pointed to policy deficiencies, 20 (6%) indicated violent nature of approach used to resolve and manage the conflicts while 12 (3%) agreed to inadequate capacity of the local institutions in settling. The implication of the responses above is that majority of the respondents are still in doubt if the government of Oyo state is capable of combating herders-farmers conflicts within communities in the state. However, one of the respondents for the interview gave a brief dimension of the conflict and exposed what makes it a challenge to the government of Oyo state to overcome. He extrapolated that:

> Before, you have like two groups of Fulani herdsmen coming and going out of the community, they don't stay for long. But later the number increased to like 10 different herds, if you ask me now the numbers of herds are uncountable. This has effect on the land resources because they are not only competing with farmers for grazing lands but also compete among themselves. So, it is first come first serve, as a result, those that comes late will rather graze their cattle on people's farms which usually lead to conflict when the farmers attempt to stop them and the government only come to our aid by sending security personnel when the Fulani people have already kill and destroyed our properties (Interview with P2 on Wednesday 11th January, 2024).

However, in an attempt to confirm the statement of P2 and other farmers, the position of one of the officers of Nigerian Police Force Area commands and Divisional Head Quarters within the Local Governments area under study during a telephone interview was that there is a general public misconception about all herdsmen to be Fulani. The respondent maintained that it was not until the formation of the committee that includes the representatives of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBA) Oyo State Chapter that himself and other non-Fulani people realized that there are many tribes that are pastoralists and nomads that also engage in cattle rearing in Nigeria. These tribes are also moving South because of the desertification in the North that has led to shortage of grassland for grazing.

According to him;

> If the farmers said there are many herders in their communities as compared to 10 years ago, they are totally correct. But what they got wrong was that, it is not all herders they see in their communities are Fulanis, we have many ethnic groups that are predominantly normads and pastoralist that usually don't venture deep into the south but because of the fact that they are looking for the same thing as the Fulanis, they now move deep down south. So when the farmers sees herders trampling on their farms with cattle, they quickly spread the news to the villages and towns that Fulani herdsmen are damaging their crops which in real sense might not be Fulani herdsmen crises (Interview with P3 on Friday 13th January, 2023).

The argument above resonated with previous studies that have documented that herdsmen in Nigeria is not limited to Fulani extractions because there are more than 12 other ethnic groups such as the Kanuri, Arab, Shuwa, Manga, Kanembu that are predominantly pastoralist, although, the Fulani are more visible due to their large population in Nigeria (Blench, 2010).

Still on the challenges confronted by government of Oyo state in combating herders-farmers conflicts, P4 expressed that:

> There is no doubt that the displacement of some of these economic productive people from their various host farming communities by the nomadic herdsmen would impede the efforts of the international best practices which obviously correspond with the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 2, and 6, which emphasize the need to adequately achieve food security and sustainable management of resources for the teaming Nigeria population. Finally, the money that would have been use on development is use on managing crises (Interview with P2 on Wednesday 11th January, 2024).

P5 lamented further, that:

> As these land use conflicts increase in frequency, intensity and geographical scope, so does their humanitarian and economic toll. The increasing availability of illicit firearms both locally made and smuggled in from neighbouring African countries worsens the bloodshed. Thousands have been forcefully displaced with properties, crops and livestock worth millions of naira destroyed at great cost to the local and state economy. In addition, there is the dimension of psychological effects on victims arising from shock and stress during crisis, the profound increase in labour and transport cost in post conflict communities and the resultant rise in poverty and food insecurity

> in affected communities and beyond (Interview with P11 on Wednesday 11th January, 2024).

The response above is supported by Olayoku (2014) who argued that the Federal government is the most serious culprit in terms of institutional failures of conflict resolution in Nigeria. The federal government seems to have abandoned the efforts to regulate grazing in the country. Since the end of the regional arrangements of the First Republic, the federal government has been tentative on the matter, and so, no national policy or arrangement was made or ever sufficed in reality.

> Government security institutions have similarly shown lack of will to pursue the protection of Nigerians from this threat. The police have been severally accused of inaction or even complicity in the face of the raging carnage between herdsmen and farming communities across the states of the federation. Indeed, the non-exemplary performance of the police has probably emboldened the herdsmen, especially in their unapproved use of sophisticated weapons during conflicts. Then, success in their rampaging endeavours has granted increasing legitimacy to their methods among those who might have remained antagonistic to such violence within their ranks (Interview with P on Monday 9th January, 2023).

The above response is in line with the revelation from Otu and Dickson (2020) who discussed that the government seems to be reluctant to tackle the hostilities because even with the consistent attacks and killings, little or no perpetrator has been brought to justice.

Also, another respondent during the interview that preferred to remain gave a somewhat different claim where he exposed that:

> Sometimes one need to be fair not to blame the Fulani herdsmen solely for the increase in conflict between the Fulani's and the Farmers. Business owners that own hotels pay the youths in neighboring community to engage in cattle rustling with the herdsmen, there by stealing their cattle and selling to them in cheaper rate. A cattle cost nothing less than #200,000, do the calculation yourself, that is over #60 million naira lost to banditry. And come to think of it, the cattle don't usually belong to the herders, so they will definitely go around with weapons to protect themselves" (Anonymous, Non-Indigene, Entrepreneur).

The accounts of the above respondent resonates with previous studies (Higazi, 2016; Dimelu, Salifu & Igbokwe, 2016; Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014a) that have extensively documented attacks on Fulani herdsmen in a bid to rustle their cattle, and in some cases many of the herders were killed. Cattle rustling are pervasive in Nigeria, although, it is not common in the South West part of Nigeria in comparism to North West. While there is lack of statistical data that can be used to ascertain the extent of the menace of cattle rustling, the figures put forward by Okoli and Okpaleke (2014a:12) situate the number of casualties among herders to be over 300 with over 60,000 cattle lost to cattle rustlers just in the year 2013 alone across 6 states in the Northern part of the country.

Conclusion

The research indicates that the security management strategies employed by the government in resolving the conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Oyo state has not been effective. The finding also revealed that the challenges confronted by government in combating herders-farmers conflicts in Oyo State include: institutional failures, corruption and politics of the belly, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, lack of coordination, policy deficiencies and lack of political will.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested for proper conflicts resolutions between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers:

i. Conflict control strategies such as regular meetings and dialogue should be encourage among the farmers and herdsmen by the community leaders to avert conflict including the setting up of a joint peace and conflict resolution committee made up of the farm community and the herders constituted by the Government to be reporting the activities of the groups to Government.

ii. State Houses of Assembly seeking to regulate the conduct of farmers and herders should promulgate laws that give recognition to human beings as persons. All legislation must seek to foster peaceful coexistence and help in harnessing Nigeria's economic and socio-cultural potential. While doing this, efforts should be made towards modeling best practices of pastoral-farmer relations as evident in countries such as Chad, Ethiopia and Niger, where the existence of institutionalized and functional mechanisms for pre-empting and resolving conflicts between farmers and pastoralists enable them to live in peace.

REFERENCES

Adejo, O., Gbough, S.A. (2019). X-raying the Impact of Grazers/Cultivators' Conflict on the Management of Secondary Schools in Benue State. *Benue State University Journal of Education Management (BSUJEM).* Vol. 1 No. 2 .

Ajayi, O. (2021). Breaking: Igangan Boiling as Bandits reportedly Killed 20 in Oyo.*Retreived from https://wwwvanguardngr.com/2021/06/breaking*

Anifowose, R. (2006). Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The Tiv and Yoruba Experience. Lagos, *First Academic Publishers*.

Bello, A.U. (2013). Herdsmen and Farmers Conflicts in North-Eastern Nigeria: Causes, Repercussions and Resolutions. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*. Rome: MCSER-CEMAS.

Blench, R. (2010). Conflicts between Pastoralists and Cultivators in Nigeria. *Reviewed Paper prepared for DFID (Department for International Development), Nigeria*. Cambridge, 9 August 2010. Available from: <www.rogerblench.info/ Development/Nigeria/ Pastoralism/Fadama%20II%20paper.pdf>

Blench, R.M. (2003). The Expansion and Adaption of Fulbe Pastoralism to Subhumid and Humid Conditions in Nigeria. *Cahiers d' etudes Africanes* 133-135: 197-212.

Coccia, M. (2019). Theories of Development. Retrieved from https://www.research.net/publi cation/333818120-theories-of-development

Egbas, J. (2018). 5 Ways to Stop Killings by Cattle Grazers. Retrieved from *https://www.pulse ng*

Ezeonwuka, I.F, Igwu, A.U. (2016). Emerging Challenges in Nigeria's National Security in the 20-1st Century: The Fulani Herdsmen Menace: *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 4(5): 3-4.

Fayemi, K. (2019). Farmer-Herder Conflict in Nigeria: Implications for National Security, in Ikelegbe, A; MuhammadWali, A; and Karim, A. (Eds) Transhumance and International Migration: Challenges for Governance, Peace and Sustainable Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: *National Institute for Security Studies*, Abuja.

Feldman, M., Hadjimichael, T., Kemeny, T., & Lanahan, L. (2014). The logic of economic development: A definition and model for investment. *Journal of Environment and Planning, Government and Policy,* 34(1), 5-21.

Gbenga-Ogundare, C. (2019). How Oyo Farmers Lost 155 Acres of Cassava, Yam, Corn, Cucumberto Invasion by Herdsmen. *Retreived from https://www.tribuneonline.com/*

Gursou, G. (2019). Farmers-Herders Conflict in Nigeria: An Analysis of the Root Causes and Effects of the Conflict. *Retreived from* https://www.reserachgate.net/publi *cation/347948827*

Ikelegbe, A. (2019). Understanding the Dynamics and Ramifications of Transhumance and International Migration for Sub-Saharan Africa, in Ikelegbe, A; Muhammad-Wali, A; and Karim, A. (Eds) Transhumance and International Migration: Challenges for Governance, Peace and Sustainable Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: *National Institute for Security Studies*, Abuja.

International Crisis Group. (2017). Herders against farmers: Nigeria's Expanding Conflict. *Africa Report* No 252: 19 September 2017.

Iro, I. (1994). The Fulani Herding System. Washington: *Adurstonfrican Development Foun dation.*

Iro, I. (1994). "Grazing Reserve Development: *A Panacea to the Intractable Strife between Farmers and Herders"* Vexco Publishing.

Maiangwa, B. (2017). "Conflicting Indigeneity" and Farmer–Herder Conflicts in Postcolonial Africa. PeaceReview, 29(3), 282-288.

McGregor, A. (2014). Alleged Connection between Boko Haram and Nigeria's Fulani Herdsmen couldspark a Nigerian Civil War. Terrorism Monitor, 12(10), 8-10

Meier, B., Hinsz, V., and Heimerdinger, S. (2007). A Framework for Explaining Aggression Involving Groups. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 1 (2007). Available from: <www.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2007.00015.x/ abstract>

Okereke, E. & Okoli, U. (2021). Analysis of 2003 Darfur Conflicts and its Implications for Security of Dafuris. *International Journal of Applied Science Research (INJASR),* 1(1), 1-13.

Okoro, J. (2018). Herdsmen/Farmers Conflict and its Effects on Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria. *Journal of Peace, security, and development,* 4(1), 143-158.

Oyero, K. (2021). Herdsmen Uprooted my N5m Cassava Farm for their Cows to Eat. *Retrieved from https://www.punch.com/*

Potter, B.A. (1995). Preventing Job Burnout, 2nd Edition, *Crisp Learning Publishers*, UK.

Tersoo, A.I. (2016). An Assessment of the Impact of Farmers/Herders Conflict on Food Security in Benue State, Nigeria. *An Unpublished work presented to the Department of Sociology Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina Nigeria.*

Torimiro, D.O., Adebo, O.T., Kolawole, O.D., Taiwo,F.A., Owoeye, M.O., and Ayodele, T.A. (2020) wrote on Fulani Herdsmen and Grazing Activities in Southwestern Nigeria: Yoruba Farm Youths' Perception Analysis. *Stud Tribes Tribals, 18(1-2): 12-20 (2020).*