



FARMER-HERDER CONFLICTS AND VULNERABILITIES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN TARABA STATES, 2015-2023

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Abstract

This study examined farmer–herder conflicts and the vulnerabilities of women and children in Taraba State, Nigeria, between 2015 and 2023. The persistent clashes between farmers and pastoral herders have become a major security and humanitarian concern in the region, leading to displacement, loss of livelihoods, food insecurity, and heightened exposure of women and children to violence, exploitation, and psychosocial trauma. The study was anchored on the Eco-Violence Theory, which explains how environmental scarcity, population pressure, and unequal resource access interact with violence and human insecurity, particularly in fragile rural settings. The study adopted a qualitative and descriptive research approach, relying on secondary data from government reports, academic publications, and humanitarian organization records. It analyzed the patterns, causes, and consequences of farmer–herder conflicts and how these conflicts exacerbate vulnerabilities among women and children in affected communities across Taraba State. The Eco-Violence Theory provided a framework for understanding how environmental degradation, competition over land and water resources, and climate variability intensify violent interactions and displacement. Findings revealed that women and children are disproportionately affected by farmer–herder conflicts through loss of shelter, disruption of education, increased poverty, sexual and gender-based violence, and limited access to healthcare and basic needs. The study further showed that environmental stressors such as desertification and shrinking grazing lands significantly contribute to conflict escalation. These conditions reinforce cycles of violence and vulnerability, consistent with the assumptions of Eco-Violence Theory. The study concluded that farmer–herder conflicts in Taraba State are not only security issues but also environmental and socio-economic problems that deepen human vulnerability, especially among women and children. It recommended strengthened conflict resolution mechanisms, sustainable land-use policies, climate adaptation strategies, and enhanced protection frameworks for vulnerable populations to reduce the humanitarian impacts of these conflicts in the state.

Keywords: Conflict, children, Farmer, Herder, Vulnerabilities, Women

1. Introduction

In the past, there was a symbiotic connection between farmers and herders, and the two groups were able to coexist together. After harvest or in return for dairy products, herders would often pay to graze their cattle on farmlands, which would then be fertilized with dung from the cows' droppings. But there is competition for scarce land resources like agriculture and grazing area because of rising human and animal population. As a consequence of these heightened land disputes, pastures and cattle paths have been encroached upon by farmers (Oruonye, Ahmed, Fatima, 2020). Many times, herders

have let their cattle graze on croplands, either on purpose or by accident, ruining the crops just before harvest. Cattle herders and producers of crops have been at odds because of this change. This long-simmering dispute has recently escalated, despite the fact that conventional conflict resolution mechanisms, such as mediation by community leaders, have historically been effective in resolving disputes between farmers and cattle herders. According to Oruonye, Ahmed, and Fatima (2020), this is mostly due to the growing mistrust and suspicion between the two parties. It is becoming increasingly concerning that

herdsmen represent a threat to the communities they visit in search of suitable pastures for their livestock. They pose a growing threat to the safety of the communities where they settle. As they equip themselves with more advanced weaponry, the tendency to attack the landowners and farmers whose property they graze their cattle on grows daily. For some areas and states in Nigeria, this poses the greatest threat to public safety. Durojaiye (2014) stated that "there have been escalations of reported attacks by herdsmen who brutally kill natives of the invaded farming communities, including women and children in various states across the country," which most clearly sums up the situation. The states of Nassarawa, Plateau, Taraba, Adamawa, Zamfara, Oyo, Imo, Cross-River, and Enugu were the worst hit. Present day fighting has extended throughout large swaths of Nigeria, an African nation, and Taraba State in particular. The tensions between Nigerians who raise crops and those who raise cattle have had a significant impact on several states, including Taraba.

In Wukari, there have been many crises involving the brutal killing of scores of individuals and the reckless vandalization of property. Aji (2014) reports that 77 individuals were killed in the recent clashes between Fulani ranchers and the indigenous inhabitants of Wukari, Taraba State. Fulani herdsmen attacked at least 40 persons, and they were all receiving medical attention for wounds of varying severity. Herdsmen and farmers frequently engage in violent fights in Taraba State, which is another disturbing development in the region. When ranchers murdered a Kuteb child as he was taking a dip in the river near Tati village, it provoked retaliatory assaults by local teenagers, leading to the farmers and herders war that devastated the Ussa and Takum Local Government areas in Taraba State. An additional five were slain in Kongkaen village in Lissam, Ussa Local Government area of Taraba, bringing the total number of casualties to eighteen in the recent spate of shootings in Takum and Ussa Local Government areas of Taraba State. According to This Day Newspaper (2017), thirteen people were killed in the massacre that began in the hamlet of Tati in the Takum Local Government region of Taraba and later

moved to Kwesati Lissam in the Ussa Local Government area. Fulani herders and farming communities are engaged in a protracted grassroots conflict in the northern, central, and southern zones of Taraba state. Although it has always been an issue with the elderly, it has become much more dangerous in the last ten years. When Fulani herders bring their livestock into non-Fulani homelands, confrontations arise. Typically, this results in the ruin of farmers' harvests. Thus, the herders force their victims to take action, such as blocking their access to farms, stealing or murdering animals, or polluting fields. The herders retaliate by attacking farmland villages, causing fatalities, in states like Taraba.

Statement of the Problem

The ongoing conflicts in Taraba State between farmers and herders are a major risk to the safety of women and children. When there is fighting between farmers and herders, it usually hits women and children the hardest. People are more likely to fall prey to poverty and exploitation after being uprooted from their homes and communities, which can have a negative impact on their life, education, and access to basic services. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to food shortages and hunger when farmer-herder disputes impede agricultural activity, kill crops and cattle, and block access to markets. People are already at a higher risk of starvation and malnutrition when they lose their means of subsistence. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to the stress, trauma, and disease outbreaks that can result from being displaced and violently displaced as a result of farmer-herder disputes. Their already precarious health situation can worsen if they are unable to use basic sanitary facilities and healthcare services as planned.

As a result of disruptions caused by farmer-herder confrontations, children may feel unsafe attending school, drop out, or both. When children's education is interrupted, it might affect their development in the long run, which in turn limits their chances and keeps them trapped in poverty. Sexual assault, kidnapping, and forced marriage are all forms of gender-based violence that are more common in locations where there is

conflict. They may be susceptible to abuse and exploitation if societal systems and safeguards fail to protect them. In communities affected by farmer-herder conflicts, women and children may experience long-term psychological and social effects as a result of the trauma and stress brought on by seeing or experiencing violence, displacement, and unsafe living conditions. Addressing these consequences and promoting healing and resilience requires mental health assistance and psychosocial interventions. The violence is still getting worse, therefore more research is needed to figure out what to do about it. The government has already tried a lot of different things, including peace building and interventions, but nothing has worked. In light of this, the purpose of this research is to examine, via case studies drawn from all three senatorial zones in Taraba State, the levels of farmer-herder conflict and the vulnerability of women and children.

The broad objective of this study is to investigate farmer-herder conflicts and vulnerabilities of women and children in Taraba States, 2015-2023. The specific objectives are:

- i. To explore the salient factors responsible for farmer-herder conflicts in Taraba State.
- ii. To unravel the consequences of herders-farmers conflict and vulnerabilities of women and children in Taraba State

The research questions for the study are:

- i. What are the salient factors responsible for herder-farmer conflicts in Taraba State?
- ii. What are the consequences of herder-farmer conflicts and vulnerabilities of women and children in Taraba States?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

Herders-Farmers Conflict

The herders' and farmers' conflict in Nigeria has a complicated and lengthy history. As long as there have been humans, there has been this battle. It all began with Adam's offspring, Cain and Abel. The Bible describes Cain as a farmer and Abel as a shepherd; nonetheless, Cain's jealousy drove him to murder Abel in the field (Okoro, 2019). According to Okoro (2019),

confrontations between herders and farmers, also known as harder-farmer conflicts, often include transhumant livestock keepers and subsistence farmers or peasant farmers.

Hagmann (2003) asserts that disputes between "herders" and "farmers" are distinct from one another. He insisted that herder-herder conflicts typically emerge among transhumant or nomadic livestock keepers as a result of territorial disputes, raids on water and pastures, and cow theft. When Fulani herders fight over who gets to keep what animals, it usually starts with cattle theft. When one group of herders rustles another's livestock, or when inexperienced herders make arrangements to let more seasoned herders take care of their animals, and then the other group breaks those agreements, tensions arise. As an example of herder-herder warfare, consider the brutal livestock raids that occur among East African pastoralists.

On the other hand, Nigeria became an oil economy, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, thanks to the country's oil discoveries, exploration, and exports. As a result of disregard for agriculture, the country's economic backbone, the grazing reserve system was subsequently dismantled. People who live in arid, distant locations are known as pastoralists, according to Antonio and Silvia (2009). Of particular concern were the gross violations of human rights documented in the report, including sexual violence and population displacement. The clashes were attributed to scarcity and competition for vital resources such as land, water, and pasture, exacerbating tensions between herders and farmers, according to Mohammed Isa (2024). Their livelihood is predicated on their extensive understanding of the local ecology and the health of their cattle. The fundamental characteristic that distinguishes pastoralism, in their view, is mobility, although the pastoral system takes several shapes and is adapted to different geographical, political, and economic contexts. When movement is frequent and erratic, we say that an organism is nomadic; when it moves back and forth between relatively stable areas, we say that it is transhumance; and when it doesn't, we say that it is sedentary. Those whose livelihood is

dependent on cattle and animal products for more than half of their income are called pastoralists. Despite the challenges posed by climate change, changing global markets, population growth, and increased competition for land and other natural resources, pastoralism is still a practical way to manage these resources.

Herders-Farmers Conflict in Nigeria: Historical Overview

The herders' and farmers' conflict in Nigeria has a complicated and lengthy history. As long as there have been humans, there has been this battle. It all began with Adam's offspring, Cain and Abel. The Bible describes Cain as a farmer and Abel as a shepherd; nonetheless, Cain's jealousy drove him to murder Abel in the field (Okoro, 2019). Conflicts between herdsman and farmers, sometimes known as herder-farmer conflicts, are those that arise between transhumant livestock keepers and subsistence cultivators or peasant farmers (Okoro, 2018). Hagmann (2003) asserts that disputes between "herders" and "farmers" are distinct from one another. He insisted that herder-herder conflicts typically emerge among transhumant or nomadic livestock keepers as a result of territorial disputes, raids on water and pastures, and cow theft. When Fulani herders fight over who gets to keep what animals, it usually starts with cattle theft. When one group of herders rustles another's livestock, or when inexperienced herders make arrangements to let more seasoned herders take care of their animals, and then the other group breaks those agreements, tensions arise. As an example of herder-herder warfare, consider the brutal livestock raids that occur among East African pastoralists. In their analysis of farmer-herder conflicts, Hussein, Sumberg, and Seddon (1999) identified a wide range of issues, such as those involving ethnicity, interests, resources, politics, evictions, murder, cattle raiding, and rustling.

Nigeria, especially the North Central area, and the rest of the country have seen heightened insecurity due to herdsman's recent movements and the ensuing conflicts with farmers and host towns. Conflicts erupt because people are fighting for limited resources, particularly pasture land. The administration appears to have given

up on the grazing reserve system that was established in 1965 by the Northern area government. A total of 417 northern grazing reserves were subsequently established by the state. 3 The herders paid taxes to the government in exchange for the government providing space, water, and immunizations for the cattle under the grazing reserve system. On the other hand, Nigeria became an oil economy, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, thanks to the country's oil discoveries, exploration, and exports. As a result of disregard for agriculture, the country's economic backbone, the grazing reserve system was subsequently dismantled.

Consequently, the agriculture sector's neglect rendered grazing reserves unsustainable. Successive governments paid it little to no mind. After having their traditional and seasonal grazing routes disrupted or stopped by industry, urbanization, population shifts, and other natural disasters, herders started to rely on them again as a safety net. Disputes and confrontations arose between farmers and host communities as a result. One of the biggest dangers to Nigeria's national security has been the recent uptick in these conflicts.

In June 2015, the federal government formed a Strategic Action Committee to investigate the matter and provide suggestions for how to handle the problem. An important player in this endeavour, the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN), which is the industry's governing body, acknowledged that desertification and climate change were among the main causes of the yearly trans-human migration from the North to the South. 4 Because farmers and herders cannot solve the problems caused by climate change and related variables on their own, the public and commercial sectors, as well as regional and global organizations, must work together (Egbuta, 2018).

Land conflicts between pastoral nomads and settled farmers are not new. The dispute, however, evolved through the years and has been increasingly destructive and violent since the turn of the millennium. Climates in different parts of the enormous nation of Nigeria can vary greatly. Its four distinct climate zones—arid, semi-arid, sub-humid, and humid—make possible a wide variety of ways of life (Egbuta, 2018). Following 1,229

casualties in 2014, the Fulani herders of Nigeria were ranked by the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) as the fourth most lethal insurgent organisation in the world. In January of 2018, according to Amnesty International (as reported in the New Telegraph on January 29th, 2018), 168 people were slaughtered by Fulani Herdsmen. The Nigerian government's reaction to community violence is "totally inadequate," meaning it is delayed, ineffectual, and, in many instances, illegal. As of January 2018, 168 people have lost their lives as a direct consequence of herdsman-farmer conflicts in the states of Adamawa, Benue, Taraba, Ondo, and Kaduna. The government continues to do nothing to prevent these deadly conflicts, which claimed the lives of hundreds in 2017. Take 2017 as an example; thousands of people were displaced and 549 people died across 14 states. The states of Enugu, Benue, Taraba, Zamfara, Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Cross Rivers, Adamawa, Katsina, Delta, and Ekiti suffered 549 fatalities and thousands of displaced persons in 2017 due to conflicts between nomadic herders and local farmers. Nevertheless, prior to this, Taiwo (2010) asserted that more than twenty villages in Nigeria—including Ago Nla, Ago Kekere, Idi Ope Kekere, Olukore, Olokuta, Apena, Jaramosan, Akeeran, Alagigo, Aaaro, Temidire, Iya Ibadan, Ideto, Apapa, Akele, Agwo, Bodija, Olufayo, OkoTeku, Moniya, Oke Ogun, Shaki, Egbedore, Ilobu, Efon Alaye, Alu, and Iyamoye. The economic impact of the farmers-pastoralists conflict in Bauchi state from 2003 to 2007 was assessed in a study by Sulaiman and Ja'afar. The study found that livestock valued at approximately 1.8 million Naira for cattle and N66, 000.00 for sheep/goats were among the livestock lost. There were six fatalities during that time, with an estimated economic loss of N2,844,000.00.

Multiple groups and individuals are involved in the deadly herdsman-farmers conflict in Nigeria. For the past two decades, herders and farmers have worked out their differences through amicable negotiations. Typically, the heads of the two groups would come to simple agreements, like the idea that a herder should pay for damage to a farm's crops if his animals got out of hand. The two communities were already

communicating before any negative occurrence occurred. On the other hand, herders would approach landowners for permission before grazing on fallow fields during the dry season (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016).

Muslim Fulanis make up the vast bulk of northern Nigeria's nomadic herders, who number in the hundreds. Global Crisis Group (2017). This people group has settled in several West and Central African nations, including Nigeria, after migrating from the Arabic peninsula (Genyi, 2017). Due of their abundance in the animal husbandry industry, they frequently find themselves at odds with farmers (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016). Some Christian organisations view the Fulani Muslim migration to the south as an effort to "Islamize the south." Another major concern is that if there is an ethnic conflict in Nigeria involving the Fulani and any of the other numerous ethnic groups, the Fulani could rally support from neighbouring Fulani states, exacerbating the ethnic tensions in West and Central Africa (International Crisis Group, 2017). They are now known as Hausa-Fulanis since Fulanis have lived and blended with Hausas in the country's central regions. Even though the majority of Hausa-Fulanis are Muslims, they are less likely to be nomadic and more likely to be politically active (Maiangwa, 2017). Christianity is the main religion practiced by many southern ethnic groups, including the Beroms. As an example, grazing conflicts are just one aspect of the broader ethnic and religious tensions that exist in Plateau state between farmers and herders. Muslims of the Fulani people and Christians of the Berom people have different views on who is indigenous and who owns the land (Okeke, 2014).

Additional parties involved in the dispute include the federal and state governments of Nigeria, as well as the Nigerian police and army. The majority of the time, the conflicts are prevented by the security personnel. According to certain evidence and accounts from witnesses, there are corrupt cops who assist the assailants. Amnesty International (2018) reports that Nigeria's security forces are now disrupting the situation rather than protecting civilians and acting as a trustworthy arm of the state. Some states' populations

have lost faith in the government and have responded by forming vigilante groups and other forms of self-defence (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016). Secondary players include local civil society groups like MACBAN and AFAN, which stand for the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria. Clingendael (2019) notes that these groups engage in mediation trainings, strive to negotiate, and defend their interests in the conflict.

Causes of Herders-Farmers Conflict

Gusroy, (2020) has identified some of the root causes of today's herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria as:

i. Infrastructure Construction

Massive investments, particularly in infrastructure, were prompted by the oil industry's role in driving Nigeria's economic expansion. This necessitated, among other things, the installation of dams and the updating of irrigation machinery.

ii. Natural Disasters

Climate change is a contributing factor to this conflict, along with poorly planned infrastructure development in Nigeria. The desertification crisis in northern Nigeria is threatening the way of life for a large number of people (Okeke, 2014).

iii. Inadequate Leadership

In 1964, the federal government of Nigeria passed the Grazing Reserves Act to designate certain areas for herders to utilise as grazing grounds. To promote sedentarization among pastoralist herders, this statute served as the initial governmental measure.

iv. Theft of Livestock

Cattle rustling, or theft, is one of the problems that exacerbates herders' conflicts with farmers. Statistically, rustling has been much more common in the last several years. The north-eastern area is also home to the terrorist group Boko Haram, who rely heavily on livestock theft as a source of funding. In northern Nigeria, herders and their cattle face danger from a number of violent bandit organisations, not the least of which is Boko Haram (Shehu, 2018).

v. Changes and Issues in Pastoralism and Agriculture

The gradual transition of some pastoralist herders to a more sedentary lifestyle is another factor fuelling

tensions between farmers and herders. As a result, younger Fulani generations take turns grazing and walking the cattle in certain areas. Younger shepherds sometimes lack the knowledge of their more seasoned predecessors when it comes to dealing with farmers, keeping animals under control, and barring them from crops.

vi. Armed Groups and Attacks

Conflict between herders and farmers did not emerge in Nigeria very recently, as shown above. But after the turn of the millennium, the war has taken a terrible turn for the worst. Disputes between farmers and herders might be resolved via the application of time-tested methods of negotiation. Traditionally, herders would negotiate with the landowner or community leader of a certain hamlet or farmer in order to use their cultivated land for grazing during the dry season.

vii. Government Weakness and Impunity

Deadly attacks between warring factions in Nigeria are unabated by the country's feeble security apparatus. When armed groups launch attacks, the police and military often arrive too late to prevent the destruction of communities or casualties amongst members of the organisations. The security forces' lack of proper training and equipment is one of the contributing factors. The technology necessary to survive in harsh natural environments, such woods and hills, is beyond their capabilities.

viii. Lack of Political Will

In the never-ending feud between herders and farmers, the political will to provide long-term solutions to the competing demands of various parties has been conspicuously lacking from governments at all levels. Politicians in charge have not taken the necessary steps to clarify the boundaries and regulations that all sides to the dispute must adhere to.

Grazing Reserves and the Conflict between Herders and Farmers

Pastoralists in Nigeria have designated some regions as grazing reserves, where they can raise animals. A grazing reserve is, as the name suggests, a designated tract of land that pastoralists may use exclusively or almost exclusively for grazing. Similar to group ranches, grazing reserves are designated sections of

rangeland where certain herds of animals can graze (Muhammad-Baba & Mohammed, 2015). According to Muhammad-Baba and Mohammed (2015), the establishment of grazing reserves began during the colonial era and continued into the post-colonial era. These reserves served various purposes, including to sedentarize nomadic cattle rearers, reduce conflicts, improve animal health and husbandry practices, increase incomes, and facilitate access to improved fodder and social facilities. The grazing reserves evolved from forest reserves, which had been established during the colonial period to preserve the woodland's resources. Huge swaths of land were designated as pastures for livestock. Dams and boreholes were granted to some of them as a result of laws that were gazetted, while others did not. Nomadic cattle rearers are incentivised to settle down by creating grazing reserves, which offer permanent water and pasture for grazing (Suleiman, 2016). During the farming season, pastoralists would be given grazing lands near cities and villages to utilise. Reserved lands gradually vanished as populations grew and farming intensified due to the lack of a legal mechanism to prohibit invasion by farmers. The Grazing Reserve Act of 1964, passed by the Nigerian government, addressed the growing issue of pastoralists' displacement from their traditional grazing grounds. Taking a step back, the law's enactment was a policy move to alleviate some of the difficulties associated with cattle development in Nigeria. The grazing law was mainly passed by the Northern Nigerian government in 1976 to encourage herdsmen to settle down. This was done for a number of reasons, including to address herdsmen's lack of land rights, to reduce or limit herd movement (which limits access to health facilities and improves herd management), to facilitate cow rearing in a more modernised approach, and to establish a ranching system (Awogbade, 2017). The northern state governments had acquired 2.3 million hectares as grazing reserves by 1980 (Oxby, 1982), making up 10% of the 22 million hectares planned under the Third National Plan (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Economics; Ingawa, Tarawah & Kaufmann, 1989). A bare minimum of infrastructure was supplied to less than 20 of the grazing reserves. According to Ma and

Tukur (2015), out of 417 grazing reserves, which cover 2.8 million hectares, none have achieved their intended goals. The federal government is now turning 177 of these properties into ranches, out of a total of 420 (Saturday Punch, 2018).

The Consequences of Friars and Herders Fighting

i. Internal Displacement and Poverty: Certain farmers permanently lose their land, and some nomadic herders are compelled to relocate to other regions due to internal conflicts within their own communities, resulting in internal displacement and poverty for members of both groups. Host farmer communities are already feeling the financial pinch as they house some displaced farmers in makeshift camps and others in their homes. As a result of losing their source of income, farmers who flee to neighbouring regions sometimes fall into extreme poverty (International Crisis Group, 2017). Those who have fled their homes as a result of the farmer-herder conflict do not have access to adequate Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. As a result, the host towns' everyday lives and educational possibilities are significantly impacted, and the so-called "camps" where some individuals seek refuge are sometimes converted churches or school buildings (Genyi, 2017).

ii. Damage to Property and Lives: Thousands of dollars' worth of property has been destroyed and hundreds of lives have been lost as a result of the herders' relentless attacks and the host communities' retaliation attacks on the herders. According to the Global Terrorism Index, 81% of the casualties in the region have been individuals, and more than 90% of the group's attacks have been on civilians. The majority of these attacks have involved armed assaults, with an average of eleven casualties per incident. Benue State appears to have taken the brunt of the latest violence, with 1,229 casualties in 2014, up from 63 in 2013. Suspected Fulani men recently slaughtered over 400 Nigerians in states including Ebonyi, Ondo, Benue, Niger, Delta, Taraba, Plateau, and Ebonyi. Conflicts between herders and civilians claimed more lives than Boko Haram strikes in 2016, according to the Global Terrorism Index.

iii. Decreased Crop Output and Income: Many crops go to waste while farmers are dealing with a crisis. The progress of Nigeria's agricultural sector has been impacted by this. According to Ofuoku and Isife (2009), urbanites rely on farmers for food supply, but the crisis discourages farmers and rural agricultural growth by severely impacting savings, loan repayment capacity, food security, and economic health. As a result of the unpredictability of oil prices on the global market, the current administration's attempts to diversify Nigeria's economy, which is based on agriculture, may be further hampered by herdsmen assaults on farmers. Efforts to modernise Nigeria's agricultural industry are slowed down by this violence, which disrupts farming activities and reduces crop production. Malnutrition and illnesses could emerge from this agriculturally poor production. No wonder, a recent study (survey) conducted in March, 2018 across 16 states of the federation (Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Plateau, Jigawa, Adamawa, Yobe, Kaduna, Kano, Taraba, Sokoto, Kaduna, Kebbi, Zamfara, Niger, Gombe) and federal capital territory, FCT by World Food Programme, WFP, Food and Agricultural Organisation, FAO, United States Aid for International Development, USAID, Mercy Corps, Famine Early Warning System Network, Save the Children, Oxfam revealed that: "A total of 3.5 million people are currently in full crisis in Nigeria, while 999,959 people are in emergency situation in need of urgent assistance". During the lean months of June through August 2018, the research predicted that 3.7 million people might be ensnared in the food crisis.

iv. Social, Ethnic, and Religious Tensions: Wars cause societal tensions. The fact that Christians and Muslims make up the bulk of the farmer-herder population might further inflame social and religious tensions. Among the impacted states, socio-economic activity have been disrupted or paralysed due to the war. People fled to safer areas, becoming refugees in their own villages; schools closed and students withdrew; businesses closed and transportation was extremely difficult for several months.

2.2 Empirical Review

According to research by Nnaji and Samuel (2019), human security in southeastern Nigeria is at risk due to climate change and the farmers-herdsmen conflict. The study concluded that Nigeria is one of the southern hemisphere nations that has been most severely impacted by climate change and global warming, while having made relatively small contributions to these phenomena. As a result of climate change-induced extreme weather events in the Sahel area, more and more pastoral ranchers are migrating southward into Nigeria's humid and sub-humid zones. With an emphasis on the human security implications, the research aims to analyse the fatal scourge that arises from the conflict between herdsmen and farmers in the southeast of Nigeria, where there is fierce competition for pastureland and abundant fresh water. With eco-violence theory serving as the theoretical foundation, the study employed a descriptive research design and the documentary technique. According to the research, human security and agricultural output are seriously jeopardised by the persistent violent conflict between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria, especially in the southeast region. What's more, the government of Nigeria has failed to take the necessary steps to stop this destructive trend. Consequently, the report suggests that the government set up grazing areas and reserves, bring those responsible to justice, and increase funding for studies that aim to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.

Oruonye, Ahmed, and Fatima (2020) examined the effects of the herder-farmer conflict on food security in Nigeria via the lens of Taraba State. According to the research, tensions between herders and crop farmers have been rising recently, making it one of Nigeria's biggest security concerns. The fighting has now extended over large swaths of Africa, touching down in particular in the states of Taraba and Nigeria. Similarly, the weaponry employed in the battle have evolved from simple, light weapons to more complicated, heavier weapons and ammunition, such AK-47s and rifles. The tensions between Nigerians who raise crops and those who raise cattle have had a significant impact on several states, including Taraba. Against this backdrop, this

study looks at the dynamics of the growing conflict between Nigerian farmers and herders, how it has affected food security in the country, and how it has been felt in Taraba State in particular. This research looks at the causes and aggravators of these conflicts, how they have developed and expanded, and how many lives they have taken in the state. It goes on to evaluate reactions, particularly from the US government and its security services, and suggests ways to lessen or avoid future disputes. Primary and secondary sources were used to compile the data for this study. Researchers in the state used a field survey to collect primary data. This research drew on a variety of policy papers prepared for the Jalingo branch of the Federal and State Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock Service. Desk research on the farmers-herders disputes supplemented the survey data. In addition, records of confrontations between farmers and herders and media coverage of such conflicts were also useful. To further enhance the study's findings, Key Informants Interviews (KIs) were also utilised. The study's results show that the conventional method of settling disputes and conflicts in rural areas has broken down, leading to an increase in confrontations between farmers and herders. There is a pervasive climate of dread and insecurity in most rural areas due to the rising frequency of disputes between farmers and herders, which has resulted in the destruction of lives and assets. As a result, agricultural cultivation and grazing have been significantly impacted, leading to decreased output. Among other things, the report suggests combating the transboundary circulation of illegal weapons and narcotics as well as establishing sustainable cattle ranching in various regions of the nation.

Abanyam, Theophilus, and Emmanuel (2020) examined the effects of tensions between Nigerian crop farmers and livestock herders on the country's economic and social progress. There have been terrible effects on Nigeria's economy and development as a whole from the proliferation of lethal armed resources used in conflicts between crop farming communities and cattle herders across the country, as well as from the failure of successive Nigerian governments to determine the causes of these conflicts and implement

lasting solutions. An examination of the effects of the conflict between cattle herders and crop farmers on Nigeria's socioeconomic development is the overarching goal of this research. Both the Tragedy of the Common Perspectives and Marxist Conflict Theory were utilised to analyse the subject. According to the research, many lives and properties are lost as a consequence of conflicts between crop farmers and cattle herders. As a result of the closure of businesses and schools, there is social and political unrest, and the conflict is associated with food insecurity (famine) and the high cost of food supplies, which worsens hunger and poverty. Schools, hospitals, houses of worship, highways, and airports are not demolished or occupied by militias of livestock herders or crop farmers. Social infrastructure facilities are also not affected. To limit the practice of grazing on farms, it was suggested that herdsmen set up ranches. Open grazing and the careless movement of animals on highways should be addressed by governments at all levels. Peaceful cohabitation and contemporary methods of livestock husbandry and farming should be taught to herdsmen and farmers. At all levels of government, the first goal should be the protection of lives and property. Herders should keep tabs on their flock from the inside, exposing and punishing any who stray. It is imperative that herders and agricultural groups devise robust and practical means of settling disputes. The study's authors believe that the federal government must immediately act in response to the relentless attacks by sending in impartial security personnel who are both trained and equipped to safeguard the lives and property of those living in the areas hit most.

In Nigeria's Taraba State, Azuaga (2020) investigated how people there saw the connection between cultural biases and conflicts between farmers and herders. Conflicts between farmers and herders in Nigeria's Taraba State were the focus of this investigation. One thousand seventy-three people from the homes of randomly chosen herders and farmers in Taraba State filled out the survey. Using a purposive sampling approach, 210 participants were chosen for the sample. A survey consisting of 18 questions was used to gather information. The survey was filled out and returned

with a success rate of 195 percent. The data was summarised using the mean and standard deviation. One component of cultural biases that promotes farmer-herder disputes in Taraba State is cultural barriers, which recognise nomads as foreigners in agricultural communities. Cultural preferences and obstacles have a negative vegetative effect, which the government should work to mitigate. The Fulani herders and farmers conflict in the Takum and Ussa Local Government regions of Taraba State, Nigeria, was examined in a research by Asanarimam (2020). With a focus on the most recent attacks in the Takum and Ussa Local Government areas, the research examined the Fulani herdsman's dispute with farmers in Taraba State. Sardauna, Ardoko-kola, Wukari, and most recently, the Takum and Ussa Local Government districts of the state have all been affected by these conflicts. Migration and other factors, such as the attitude of immigrants and the perception of host communities, moderately influence the likelihood for climate change to precipitate community disputes. The Fulani herdsman are totally reliant on the pastures that the desertification of the Sahel area has drained. As a result, they go to extreme lengths to obtain these pastures, which leaves them vulnerable to opposition, which they respond with resistance, leading to community wars of a similar kind. In order to prevent Fulani from straying great distances in quest of pastures, which might lead to conflicts, the research suggests that the government establish laws to establish grazing reserves and construct dams to store water and pasture in states where Fulani are mostly found.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

According to Homer Dixon's (1994) notion of eco-violence, this research will follow his lead. According to Homer-Dixon and Blitt (1998), fresh water, farmland, forests, and fish are four essential natural resources that many developing nations' big populations rely on heavily for food production. In certain situations, conflicts might arise when these resources become scarce or diminish due to abuse, overuse, or deterioration. Cropland, water, forests, and fish are becoming scarcer for some population groups due to factors such as population expansion, uneven access to

resources, and declines in the quality and quantity of renewable resources (Homer-Dixon, 1998). For both the smaller communities hit hard by the shortage and the bigger economies on a national and even global scale, this might mean lower economic output. Refugees or those forced to flee their homes may seek refuge in other countries. Homer-Dixon and Blitt (1998) and Gledish and Urdal (2002) found that migration triggers ethnic conflicts in new areas, whereas deprivation conflicts occur when affluence falls. The theory's central premise is that environmental dangers cause resource scarcity, which in turn causes inequality in the allocation of resources, which in turn causes poverty and violence in some social groups.

In order to promote a more sustainable and equal future for all living species on Earth, eco-violence theory is essential for bringing attention to the interdependence of social and environmental concerns, motivating collective action to resolve environmental challenges, and increasing understanding of these interconnections (Homer-Dixon 1998). To better understand the origins and consequences of the continuing farmers-herdsman conflict in Nigeria, eco-violence theory is applicable to this research. Mobility is a fundamental aspect of herdsman life, and climate change is the driving force behind this mobility. Sea levels have dropped due to global warming, which has reduced the availability of fish and other freshwater resources. There is a scarcity of the environmental resources that might incite violence because of the destruction of croplands and forests caused by drought and desertification.

3. Methodology

It was a survey research design that was used for this study. The field (defined population) was surveyed in order to gather vast amounts of consistent data. Field survey research is the most common method for gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. In addition, quantitative methods allow for the systematic empirical research of quantitative phenomena through survey design, whereas qualitative methods allow for the correct evaluation of processes that allow for the critical evaluation of information obtained.

A total of 542,217 individuals from the Bali, Karim Lamido, and Takum LGAs of Taraba State make up the population that is being studied in this study (542,217 Population Census, 2006). Nonetheless, the study utilised a sample size of 400 respondents, with the Taro Yameni statistical approach (1967) serving as the guiding formula for the selection of the sample size.

The study used purposive and random sampling techniques as a method of selecting and distributing respondents among the study area. The study relied on questionnaires that were well-constructed. In order to get the desired data from the participants, a

questionnaire was utilised. Both Part A and Part B of the surveys were administered. In Section 'A,' we asked for the respondents' demographic information. In Section B, we asked them to rate their agreement or disagreement with the study's stated goals using a Likert scale: SA for Strongly Agreed, A for Agree, SD for Strongly Disagree, D for Disagree, and UD for Undecided. This study's questionnaire was administered by the researcher herself.

4. Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Demography Respondents

S/N	Variable	Items	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	103	26.2%
		Female	289	73.7%
		Total	392	100%
2	Marital Status	Single	225	57.1%
		Married	167	42.6%
		Total	392	100%
3	Age	18-20 year	89	22.7%
		21 – 25 years	123	31.3%
		26-30 years	86	21.9%
		31-35 years	51	13.1%
		36 and above	43	10.9%
		Total	392	100%
4	Local Government area	Bali	132	33.6%
		Karim Lamido	140	35.7%
		Takum	120	30.6%
		Total	392	100%
5	Occupation	Farmer	196	50%
		Herder	138	35.2%
		Business	27	6.8%
		Public Servants	31	7.9%
		Total	392	100%
6	Qualification	Primary	181	46.1%
		Secondary	128	32.6%
		Tertiary	83	21.1%
		Total	392	100%

Source: Survey Research, 2024

The data in the table above shows that there are 103 male respondents (or 26.3% of the total) and 289 female respondents (or 73.7% of the total). There are 225 respondents, or 57.1%, who are not married, and 167 respondents, or 42.6%, who are. The age bracket of 18–

20 has 89 respondents, or 22.7%. The majority of the responders (123) are within the age bracket of 21–25 (31.3%). Eighty-six people, or 21.9% of the total, fall into the 26–30 age bracket. The age group of 31–35 has 51 responders, or 13.1% of the total. The age group of

36 and up has 43 responses, or 10.9% of the total. The Balinese LGA is represented among the 132 responders (33.6%). Out of 140 participants, 33.6% are from the Karim Lamido LGA. However, thirty-six percent of the sample, or 120 people, are located in the Takum LGA. half of the people who filled out the survey are farmers. Herders make up 35.2% of the responders (138 people). Among the 120 respondents, 30.6% are self-identified businesswomen. In contrast, 31 respondents, or 7.9%, work for the government. Out of the total responders,

181 (or 46.1%), have completed elementary school. One hundred twenty-six people (32.6% of the total) have an SSCE. In contrast, 83 respondents (21.1%) possess advanced degrees such as a Ph.D., M.Sc., or diploma. This may indicate that the respondents were eager to improve their situation because they were in the prime of their lives.

Section B: Respondents View

Table 2: What are the salient factors responsible for herders-farmers conflict in Taraba State?

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	U	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
6.	Infrastructure construction	210 (53.5)	167 (42.6)	2 (0.5)	1 (0.2)	12 (3.1)	1.125	0.133	Accepted
7.	Poor Governance	212 (54.1)	152 (38.1)	10 (2.5)	8 (2.4)	10 (2.5)	1.436	0.143	Accepted
8.	Cattle Theft	142 (36.2)	224 (57.1)	5 (1.1)	2 (0.1)	19 (4.1)	1.618	0.117	Accepted
9.	Transformation and Problems in Agriculture and Pastoralism	130 (33.1)	251 (64.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	11 (2.1)	1.701	0.111	Accepted
10	Armed Groups and Attacks	212 (54.1)	126 (32.1)	12 (3.1)	9 (2.2)	33 (8.4)	1.619	0.114	Accepted

Source: Field survey 2024

According to the statistics on infrastructure development, infrastructure development significantly affects conflict dynamics, as stated by 53.5% of respondents who were highly in agreement and 42.6% of respondents who were in agreement. Just a small fraction (0.5%) were firmly opposed, 0.2% disagreed, and 3.1% were unsure. It appears that many people see insufficient or unequal infrastructure development as a cause of conflict. This might mean that communities associate physical development neglect with marginalisation, which could lead to more complaints. While a tiny percentage (2.5% and 2.4%) strongly disagreed and disagreed, 54.1% and 38.1% of respondents, respectively, agreed that inadequate governance contributed to conflict. A further 2.5% were still on the fence. Accordingly, most people link increased conflict with inefficient leadership, lax accountability measures, and poor governance systems.

The critical importance of open government systems in reducing tensions and promoting peace is shown by this.

A significant generator of violence is cattle theft, according to 36.2% who strongly agreed and 57.1% who agreed; just 1.1% strongly disagreed and 0.1% disagreed, respectively. Concerning 4.1%, they were unsure. This trend demonstrates that cattle rustling is a major security concern in pastoralist communities, acting as a catalyst for and a facilitator of violent crime. Therefore, security measures and community-based preventative measures are necessary to combat livestock theft. This fact is further emphasised by the replies concerning transformation as well as issues in pastoralism and agriculture. No one disagreed with the statement that pastoral and agricultural changes lead to conflict; nonetheless, 33.1% of respondents strongly

agreed and 64.1% agreed. In fact, just 2.1% could not make up their minds. The great majority of experts agree that farmer-herder conflicts are caused by shifting farming methods, decreasing amounts of arable land, and the effects of climate change. A crucial role in easing tensions might be played by policies that tackle sustainable land management and agricultural modernisation.

In the last category, "armed groups and attacks," 54.1% of respondents strongly agreed and 32.1% agreed that

these groups make conflict worse; 3.1% disagreed, 2.2% were unsure, and 8.4% were unsure. While the existence of armed organisations is clearly linked to increased insecurity, the level to which they affect remains ambiguous among respondents. However, strong security reforms and disarmament programs are required since the results show that the presence of armed individuals makes matters worse and exacerbates other causes of violence, such livestock theft and poor governance.

Table 3: What are the consequences of herders-farmers conflict and vulnerabilities of women and children in Taraba States?

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	U	Mean	SD	Remark
11.	Internal displacement and poverty	322 (82.1)	61 (15.1)	2 (0.1)	1 (0.1)	6 (1.1)	1.813	0.149	Accepted
12.	Loss of Lives and Property	98 (25)	290 (73.1)	1 (0.1)	1 (0.1)	2 (0.1)	1.821	0.157	Accepted
13.	Reduction in Output and Income of Crops	75 (19.1)	287 (73.1)	11 (2.1)	5 (1.1)	14 (3.1)	1.134	0.214	Accepted
14.	Ethno-Religious and Social Tension	300 (76.1)	67 (17.1)	3 (0.1)	2 (0.1)	20 (5.1)	1.646	0.215	Accepted
15.	Socio-Economic Stagnation	90 (22.9)	298 (76.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (1.1)	1.645	0.211	Accepted

Source: Field survey 2024

According to the results about the relationship between poverty and internal displacement, 82.1% of respondents were in strong agreement and 15.1% were in agreement that displacement significantly worsens poverty levels. firmly few people shared the opposite opinion; just 0.1% were firmly opposed, 0.1% disagreed, and 1.1% were unsure. The general agreement is that when people are compelled to leave their homes due to violent conflicts or instability, it strips them of their means of support, leaving them vulnerable to economic hardship, food insecurity, and reliance on humanitarian assistance.

Regarding casualties and property damage, 73.1 percent and 25.1 percent of respondents agreed that this is a major outcome of war, whereas a pitiful 0.1 percent disagreed, 0.1 percent strongly disagreed, and 0.1 percent were unsure. The fact that almost all respondents acknowledged the catastrophic human and

material consequences of armed wars is evident from this finding. Devastating damage to homes, crops, and vital infrastructure not only makes communities more vulnerable, but also makes rehabilitation and reconciliation efforts take longer. While 73.1% agreed and 19.1% strongly agreed that disputes lower agricultural revenue and production, just 1.9% disagreed. At the same time, 3.1% were unsure, 2.1% were in severe disagreement, and 1.1% disagreed. In rural areas of Taraba State, where conflicts interrupt farming, decrease yields, and subsequently lower household incomes, the replies highlight the importance of agriculture to rural lives. The economic vulnerability of rural areas during extended crises is shown by this discovery.

Conflicts exacerbate divides along ethnic and religious lines, according to 76.1% of respondents who strongly agreed and 17.1% who agreed, highlighting the issue of

socio-religious and ethnic friction. Minimal percentages held opposing or ambiguous views; for example, only 0.1% strongly opposed, 0.1% disagreed, and 5.1% were undecided. This indicates that wars not only have monetary and physical effects, but also deepen divisions, distrust, and animosity based on identities, which further complicates efforts to establish peace.

Lastly, the broader conclusions are supported by the notion of socio-economic stagnation. With no respondents dissenting and just 1.1% unsure, around 22.9% of respondents were in agreement that disputes hinder socio-economic growth, while 76.1% were in agreement. This agreement proves that wars prevent investment, cut down on healthcare and education, and keep people mired in poverty, all of which impede growth. It goes on to say that for Taraba State's socioeconomic growth to be sustainable, peace and security are must-haves.

4.1 Discussion of Findings

The herders' and farmers' dispute in Taraba State is mostly caused by the installation of infrastructure. This study's results are in agreement with those of Genyi (2017) who unveiled the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the herders-farmers conflict and infrastructure building. While infrastructure development has the potential to boost economies and provide access to resources, it also carries the risk of escalating existing conflicts, particularly in areas where disputes over land use, ownership, and resource access are already present. Land purchase is a common process in infrastructure projects, but it can spark disagreements about who owns what and how to access it. The development of highways, dams, or urban growth can encroach into communal grazing pastures, which herders and farmers have traditionally used. This can lead to conflicts over access and usage of these resources. Infrastructure development, according to Gusroy (2020), can change the distribution and availability of resources like water and grazing area. In regions where these resources are already scarce, this might make rivalry between farmers and herders even more intense. When two or more communities compete for limited resources, tensions

rise and violence breaks out as people try to protect what little they have. Disruptions to traditional livelihoods and social structures are common outcomes of infrastructure projects that require the displacement of populations, particularly farmers and herders. Competition for resources and livelihood prospects in the newly relocated regions might intensify tensions between various groups if there are no proper compensation or relocation plans in place. In order to let herders and their cattle traverse wider areas, Egbuta (2018) said that better infrastructure like roads and transit networks is necessary. This has the potential to help herders find new pastures to graze their livestock, but it also has the potential to escalate tensions between nomadic farmers and herders over issues like water rights, crop damage, and land degradation. Ethnic and cultural identities frequently play a role in herder-farmer confrontations in Taraba State, as they do in many other states. If particular groups are favoured in terms of land distribution, employment possibilities, and resource distribution, then existing ethnic conflicts can be intensified by infrastructure projects, which can lead to complaints and war. This study's findings are in line with those of Abbas (2012), who showed that, like in many other locations, women and children bear the brunt of the herders-farmers conflict in Taraba State.

The conflict causes internal displacement and worsens poverty. It breaks up families, stops them from going to school, and cuts them off from basic necessities like clean water and medical treatment. Conflicts between herders and farmers may wreak havoc on crops, animals, and property, putting women out of work in agriculture and livestock raising (Hagmann, 2003). This loss is exacerbated by displacement because many families cannot carry on their farming in their new homes. For families where a woman is the breadwinner, this means losing her income and being even more susceptible to food insecurity and other forms of economic hardship. Displacement caused by conflict makes it harder for kids to go to school. Due to financial restrictions, poor educational facilities, or a lack of documents, displaced families sometimes face challenges while trying to register their children in schools in their new places. Poverty and relocation

disproportionately impact girls, who are more likely to be forced to drop out of school to assist with household tasks or be married at a young age. Women and children are especially vulnerable to the health hazards associated with displacement and poverty. Malnutrition, water-related illnesses, and maternal and infant mortality are more common among displaced people because they do not have access to safe drinking water, proper sanitation, and medical treatment. According to Musgrave (2004), in informal settlements and congested displacement camps, there is a higher likelihood of gender-based violence, which includes sexual exploitation and abuse, targeting women and children. Conflict and relocation can cause long-term psychological and social harm to children and mothers. As a result of the breakdown of their social networks and support systems, displaced women and children often experience feelings of isolation and vulnerability. Women and children impacted by the herders-farmers conflict in Taraba State may experience anxiety, despair, and other mental health concerns due to exposure to violence, loss of loved ones, and instability.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

One of the main variables that the study found to be fuelling the farmers-herders conflict in Taraba State is infrastructure building. Even though infrastructure development is good for the economy and makes resources more accessible, it can exacerbate conflicts in areas where these issues are already contentious, such as land use, ownership, and resource access. Land acquisition projects can cause herders and farmers to clash because they force communities to relocate or cut

off their access to grazing routes. This exemplifies the intricate web of connections between development and state-level conflict. The results also showed that women and children are hit the most by the farmers-herders conflict, which makes them even more vulnerable due to factors like internal relocation and growing poverty. Because of their lower socioeconomic status and less ability to escape, women and children are disproportionately affected by violent incidents. Fighting often displaces whole populations, which has a domino effect on other aspects of daily life including healthcare, schools, and houses.

Based on the findings and conclusion, the study recommends:

- i. Government and stakeholders should enhance land-use planning and regulation to reduce herders-farmers conflict in Taraba State. This can be achieved by properly demarcating farmlands, grazing routes, and infrastructure development.
- ii. Considering the impact of the herders-farmers conflict and the particular vulnerabilities of children and women, it is advised that displaced women and children have priority in social protection programs that provide humanitarian assistance, educational continuity plans, and healthcare access.
- iii. Taking into account the scrutiny of state government reactions, it is advised that the government strengthen its systems for security interventions and humanitarian response, making sure that policies and actions are open, honest, and considerate of vulnerable populations' needs.

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