



FARMERS-HERDERS' CONFLICT AND ITS IMPACT ON THE ECONOMIC LIVELIHOODS OF WOMEN IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria in general, and Plateau State in particular continues to grapple with persistent farmers-herders' conflicts, significantly affecting various segment of society. This paper examined how these conflicts affect women's economic livelihoods in Plateau State. Specifically, the paper examines the causes of farmers-herders conflict and its impact on women's economic livelihoods. The study was anchored on environmental scarcity theory. The study used the qualitative research approach, focusing on narrative literature review of scholarly articles, policy documents, and reports. The findings revealed that resource competition, cattle rustling, ethnic/religious differences and long-standing disagreements between farmers and herders are key drivers of farmer-herder conflicts in Plateau State in particularly and Nigeria at large. It was found that women, who rely heavily on agriculture and trade in Plateau State, face economic displacement, loss of livelihoods, and increase vulnerability to poverty due to the destruction of farmlands, loss of livestock, and restricted market access. Despite government interventions and claims of restoration of peace, pockets of conflicts persist and women have continued to bear the consequences on their economic livelihoods. The study concluded that farmers-herders' conflicts have affected the economic livelihoods of women in Plateau State, recommended among many others that the Plateau State government should establish an integrated land and resource management and peacebuilding framework that combines land-use planning, climate-resilient water development that include provision of shared water infrastructure such as solar-powered boreholes and that government in collaboration with the traditional institutions should establish community-based peace and resource-sharing committees that include farmers and herders to manage land and water use fairly, in order to prevent violence, and protect women economic livelihoods such as farming, trade, income, employment, and access to productive assets.

Keywords: Herders, Farmers, Conflict, Herders-Farmers Conflict, Economic Livelihoods

1. Introduction

Conflicts over natural resources, particularly between farmers and herders, have become a persistent challenge in rural communities globally. This conflict is often driven by competing demands for finite resources like land (grazing and farming land), water, forests, etc. In African, Asia and Latin America, disputes over farmlands and water sources often lead to violent clashes, undermining social cohesion and development (Akerjiir, 2018). Such conflicts disproportionately affects communities, where access to these resources is

central to livelihoods. In Africa, pastoralism has historically contributed to economic growth and cultural identity (Sangouma *et al.*, 2018; Abubakar *et al.*, 2019; Bodama *et al.*, 2020). However, demographic pressures, environmental changes, and weak governance have intensified tensions between herders and sedentary farmers, making farmer-herder conflicts a persistent issue (Oladeji *et al.*, 2022). Nigeria, in particularly; has become a hotspot for these conflicts with devastating consequences for economic development, particularly in the North-Central region.

Historically, farmers and herders in Nigeria coexisted peacefully through traditional land-sharing and conflict resolution mechanisms. The Ruga settlement system exemplified this harmony, ensuring designated grazing areas (International Crisis Group, 2017). However, factors like population growth, urbanization, and climate change have disrupted this balance. Desertification in Northern Nigeria has pushed herders southward, leading to conflicts over land rights in regions like Plateau State (Oli *et al.*, 2018; Nassef, 2023). Population expansion, commercial agriculture, and poor land-use policies have further strained relations, with government efforts like the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) criticized for lacking inclusivity (Search for Common Ground, 2018).

It is sad to state that the North-Central geographical zone of Nigeria, encompassing States like Plateau, Nasarawa, and Benue is particularly prone to farmer-herder conflicts. The International Crises Group (2018) highlighted that Plateau State, along with Nasarawa and Benue States, recorded the highest incidents of fatalities due to farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria's North-Central region. Known for its fertile soils and lush vegetation, the region is a magnet for both agricultural and pastoral activities. Plateau State, which is a State in the North-Central region, once known as the "Home of Peace and Tourism", has witnessed persistent violent conflicts since 1999. Initially characterized by ethno-religious tensions, the nature of conflict in Plateau State shifted to farmer-herder clashes after 2008 (Idowu, 2017; Bauda, 2022). According to Kwaja (2014), competition over land and grazing areas has fueled distrust, exacerbated by cattle rustling and rural banditry. For instance, the West African Network for Peacebuilding (2021) documented that in August 2021 alone, 122 people lost their lives in Plateau State as a result of these conflicts. The report further revealed that the conflicts have led to widespread displacement, with over 300,000 individuals displaced in the North-Central region in 2018.

According to the Amnesty International Reports (2024), just between December 2023 and February 2024, 1,336 people were killed in Mangu, Bokkos and Barkin Ladi

Local Government Areas of Plateau State. Whereas, 29,554 people are displaced from their homes, including 13,093 children and 16,461 women. This report reveals that women are highly affected by the recurring conflicts in spite of Government response. Women and children constitute a very high proportion of the displaced population, heightening their vulnerability to poverty, exploitation and neglect. Despite Plateau State Government's claim of restored peace, and introduction of several measures aimed at resolving and mitigating the effects of the conflicts, the consequences remain severe, particularly for women who continue to manifest a decline in their economic activities. It is sad that women who rely heavily on farming and trade, are among the most affected by these conflicts. Loss of farmlands and livestock has diminished their income sources, while restricted mobility due to insecurity limits their access to markets and economic opportunities (Olusola, 2018). Cases of sexual violence and exploitation have risen in conflict-affected areas, further deepening their socio-economic marginalization. Additionally, the displacement of families disrupts children's education, increasing their vulnerability to child labour and early marriage (Suchi & Musa, 2021).

Thus, beyond humanitarian concerns, these conflicts have posed a threat to the economic stability of women in Plateau State. While extensive research exists on the causes and socio-economic impacts of farmer-herder conflicts, such researches explore the effects of the conflict on the broader population and without specificity to Plateau State. Thus, there is lack of studies specifically addressing the socio-economic burdens borne by women in Plateau State. This paper seeks to address this gap, providing insights for policymakers and development practitioners to implement targeted interventions that support women's resilience and economic recovery in conflict-affected areas of the State.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are the causes of farmers-herders' conflict in Plateau State in particular and Nigeria at large?

- ii. How has farmers-herders' conflict impacted the economic livelihoods of women in Plateau State, Nigeria?

The broad objective of the study is to examine the impact of farmers-herders' conflicts on economic livelihood of women in Plateau State. The specific objectives of the study area to:

- i. find out the causes of farmers-herders' conflict in Plateau State in particular and Nigeria at large.
- ii. examine how farmers-herders' conflict impacts the economic livelihoods of women in Plateau State, Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

Concept of Conflict

Conflict is inevitable in human society, arising from incompatible goals and actions with attendant costs and commitments. Jeong (2018) sees conflict as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals. Defined in broadest terms, conflict denotes the incompatibility of subject positions. This definition emphasises the opposition or incompatibility at the heart of the conflict, and initially leaves open the exact nature of these incompatibilities, i.e. whether they are between individuals, groups or societal positions; whether they rest in different, interests or beliefs; or whether they have a material existence or come into being only through discourse. Given this initial definition, conflict is not always characterised by violence. Yet, conflict might escalate and lead to destructive results, in particular in the form of physical violence that is increasingly seen as legitimate as conflict intensifies.

Conflict in the context of social activities can also mean disagreement between two or more persons. It is perhaps because of this ubiquity of conflict that many consider the phenomenon as the normal state of human interaction. Zartman (2019) considers conflict as an inevitable aspect of human interaction and an

unavoidable concomitant of choices and decisions. It is inherent in decisions even when there is only one person. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2020) defines conflict as disagreement between individuals, groups, organizations, or nations in their interaction over issues of interests, values, beliefs, emotions, goals, space, positions, scarce resources, and so on.

Conflict is a condition in which one identifiable group of human beings-whether tribal, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, socio-economic, political, or others is engaged in conscious opposition to one or more other identifiable groups because these groups are pursuing what are or appear to be incompatible goals. Obikili and Yusuf (2021) describe conflict as a situation or condition of disharmony in an interactional process. This implies that it is normal for people to disagree on issues because of individual differences. In fact, it is a sign of creative and positive growth in a relationship. Such views naturally give rise to disagreement. When such disagreement is constructively resolved, it becomes the positive part of conflict, but when it is allowed to degenerate into violence, it becomes the negative part of conflict.

Conflict in the context of this study is a situation in which the relationship between and/or among opposing individuals, groups, communities, or states is characterized by a lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency toward violent confrontation or war. The frequent and persistent violent conflict between farmers and herders is a major security challenge that confronts Nigeria. These conflicts have emerged as a result of new and particularistic forms of political consciousness and identity, often structured around ethno-religious identities (Okeke *et al.*, 2022). It should, however, be noted that conflict is something normal, an everyday social phenomenon, and a simple and natural characteristic of human social systems. Society, by its very nature, as human beings themselves, is not perfect, so disharmony and contradictions are inevitable parts of social development (El-Rufai & Obioha, 2023). The distinction that has to be made is between conflict itself and the negative consequences that some ways of dealing with conflicts have, such as war. In this perspective, a

war is not the conflict but rather the negative result of how the conflict was dealt with. In the light of this study conflict refers to any form of disagreement that may be violent or non-violent in nature but leads to breach of peace and mistrust

Farmers-Herders' Conflict

Herders are farmers are land resources users that have co-existed for decades in different parts of Nigeria. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization [FAO] (2020), farmers are individuals who own, work on, or operates agricultural enterprises, either commercially or to sustain their families. They are engaged in agriculture, raising living organisms for food or raw materials. Okoro (2018) noted that the term implies to people who do some combination of raising field crops, orchards, vineyards, poultry, or other livestock. And that based on this broad definition, farmers are both the herdsmen who keep livestock and crop farmers. However, in Nigeria's North-Central region, most farmers are arable farmers, focusing on crop farming rather than livestock, and that is the context under which this paper defined farmers. Thus, the term farmers in this context simply refers to persons or individuals who are engaged in arable farming or crop farmers. Adewuyi et al. (2020) describe crop farming as the cultivation of plants for food, feed, fiber, medicinal, or industrial purposes. Crop farming, which dates back to ancient times, has evolved significantly, with modern practices emphasizing high-yield and climate-resilient varieties to meet global food demands (World Bank, 2022).

Herdsman on the other hand are owners or keepers of herds of animals like sheep, goats and cattle. They usually move their herds from one place to another in search of pasture and fresh water (Oli et al., 2018). Herdsman are persons who take care of a large group of animals of the same type, such as sheep, cows, goats etc (Ajibefun, 2018). In Nigeria, it is predominantly the occupation of the Fulani ethnic group. Fulani is an ethnic group who are mostly pastoralists, and pastoralism is a situation whereby people herd animals to sustain their livelihood's wherein domesticated animals are released

onto large vegetated outdoor lands (pastures) for grazing (Bhasin, 2011). Despite various criticisms about pastoralism and its relevance in modern world, it remains a successful strategy to support a population where there is little access to social, cultural, physical, biological and environmental amenities. Fulani pastoralists are mostly nomadic or semi-nomadic in nature. The former are often involved in random movement of cattle while the latter makes transhumance migration and return to their camps or homes. It should be noted that hitherto, Fulani pastoralists practiced nomadism (characterized by continuous movement in search of pasture and water for their livestock).

According to Okoro (2018), farmers-herders' conflicts are conflicts occurring between peasant farmers or subsistence cultivators and nomadic or transhumant livestock keepers. The increasing waves of this dimension of violent conflicts between farmers and herdsmen have recently become a cause for worry, especially in wetland areas of the middle belt. North Central Nigeria (Usman Leme, 2017). Farmers-Herders conflicts in Nigeria usually involve disputes over land and/or cattle between herders and farmers. The most impacted states are those of the Nigerian Middle Belt like Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau. Ofem and Inyang (2014) report that the quest for protection and preservation of secured economic sources of livelihood appears to be the bane for continued conflict between herdsmen and farmers in different places. The struggle for the use of agricultural land for planting and grazing is becoming fiercer and increasingly widespread in Nigeria, largely due to intensification of production activities that are necessitated by rising human population.

The competition between farmers and herdsmen, however, has often times turned into serious hostilities and social friction in many parts of Nigeria. Ajibo et al., (2018) observes that all over Nigeria there is an emphasis on the need for the promotion of agriculture as an alternative to oil as a major source of national revenue. However, conflicts over scarce natural resources like grazing land and farming land upon which farmers-herders' conflict is predicated has become a bane to the

economic development of the people to which women are also affected.

Economic Livelihoods

Economic livelihoods generally encompass the economic wellbeing of an individual, group, communities or a society. It involves access to basic necessities like income sources, productive resources, healthcare and other social services as well as security of lives and properties or assets that yield wealth. Economic livelihoods refer to the ways in which individuals or households generate income, access resources, and maintain their well-being through economic activities (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Ellis, 2000). It can also refer to the means by which individuals or households secure the resources necessary to sustain their economic well-being. It encompasses income-generating activities, access to productive assets, employment opportunities, and overall economic stability. In the context of this study, economic livelihood specifically relates to the ability of women in rural communities in Plateau State to engage in and sustain productive economic activities via farming, trading agricultural products, small-scale entrepreneurship, and livestock rearing. It is however, sad that conflict-induced displacement, insecurity, and destruction of resources significantly affects these activities, exacerbating economic vulnerability. Understanding economic livelihoods in this context is crucial for assessing the broader socio-economic implications of conflict and designing effective interventions to support affected women.

Therefore, economic livelihoods of women refer to the various activities, assets, and opportunities through which women generate income, support their households, and achieve economic security. These livelihoods include farming, petty trading, livestock rearing, agro-processing, small and medium enterprises, wage employment, and access to productive resources such as land, water, credit, tools, and markets. Studying the effect on conflicts between farmers and herders on these means of subsistence is important because through these activities, women contribute significantly to

household welfare, food security, and local economic development.

However, conflicts severely disrupt these economic livelihoods. Most times violent clashes between farmers and herders often lead to the destruction of farms, crops, and livestock, while insecurity restricts women's access to land, water, and other productive assets. Also, due to conflicts, most markets and trading routes become unsafe or inaccessible, reducing women's ability to sell goods and earn income. Many women are forced into displacement, which interrupts farming and business activities and weakens social and economic networks. In addition, conflict increases women's unpaid care responsibilities, leaving them with less time and energy for income-generating activities. Hence, because of this, women experience declining income, rising poverty, and greater food insecurity, making them among the most economically vulnerable groups in conflict-affected communities, especially in Plateau State where conflicts have been going on for a long time now, leading to displacement of rural dwellers who are majorly farmers and herders.

Causes of Conflict between Farmers and Herders

Conflicts between cattle herders and farmers have existed since the beginning of agriculture and increased or decreased in intensity and frequency depending on economic, environmental and other factors. These conflicts have constituted serious threats to the means of survival and livelihoods of both the farmers and cattle herders and what both groups are tenaciously protecting and projecting. In most of these encounters, citizens are regularly killed; the destruction or loss of property leaves an already endangered populace even poorer. Evidences have revealed various reasons for the continued conflict between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. The most predominant cause of conflicts between the nomadic cattle herders and sedentary farmers are in Nigeria, and Plateau State in particular is the illegal invasion of farms and destruction of crops by cattle, particularly during the planting season and immediately after the harvesting period (Umoh, 2017) In a recent study, Adeoye (2017) found deliberate grazing of cattle on crops, farmers'

encroachment on grazing reserves, water holes and cattle paths and indiscriminate bush burning by herders as notable causes of conflict between the groups in parts of Kano, Yobe and Borno States of Nigeria. In another study by Adelokun et al. (2015) in Oyo State, about 34.2% of the farmers and 6.7% of the pastoralists indicated that crop damage always triggers conflict between them.

Also, farmer-pastoralist conflicts have been associated with the conflict of land resource use exacerbated by dwindling resources (Adogi, 2019 and Ajibo et al., 2023). The genesis of conflicts over access, use and management of land resources between nomadic cattle herders and sedentary farmers is as diverse as the nature of the conflicts themselves. Some researchers have linked this crisis to the theory of eco-violence (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014), where environmental factors and exploitation of scarce resources leads to conflict and violence. This may explain the dwindling grazing resources (land, pasture etc.) and poor management of existing grazing reserves (Ajibo et al., 2018) as one of the major causes. Furthermore, the population is dynamic and ever increasing compared to land that is relatively static. The population growth rate of Nigeria per year is 3.2% (National Population Commission, 2014). Therefore, more and more people will continue to compete over land.

The prevalence of cattle rustling has been widespread, particularly in the northern part of the country where cattle rearing obtains as a dominant agricultural practice. Recent developments tend to have implicated cattle rustling in the rising wave of violence in northern Nigeria, as exemplified in the phenomenon of Boko Haram insurgency and herder/farmer conflicts (Okoli & Okpaleke 2014). In Plateau State, one of the major reasons herders have alluded to their attacks on farming communities is the persistent theft of their cattle or cattle rustling. While in some cases the cattle are butchered and the meats carted away, in other cases they are rustled and sold for money. Kwaja (2014) observes that rustling of cattle in the rural and even urban areas of the middle belt has become a major security challenge that has continued to fuel violent conflict and insecurity. It is a criminal

enterprise that is fast holding communities under siege and viewed as a spur of an underground economy that is deeply attached to the political economy of some agrarian communities.

Recently, farmers-herders conflict has escalated as another dimension of ethnic and religious differences with little effort from government or community leaders aimed at addressing them. This conflict is not only economic but also deeply intertwined with ethnic and religious dynamics, often manipulated for political purposes (Uduma, 2020). The cyclical nature of these conflicts results in repeated displacements and the destruction of livelihoods, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups such as women. Ethnic jingoists and politicians have been benefitting in these struggles and without doubt have succeeded in creating a divide between the farmers and pastoralists, especially in communities that are less educated. This scenario is quite apt in describing the pattern of the farmers-herders conflict in Plateau State where the farmers are predominantly native Christians and the herders are predominantly Muslims. This demographic divide has been used to exacerbate the conflict. It is sad that leaders at the Federal, State, Local Governments and even at community levels become perplexed and wondered on how these issues can be resolved (Muhammed, Ismaila & Bibi, 2015).

It has been observed that the prolonged disagreement between farmers and herders has triggered conflicts in most of the communities in the State. Burton (2016) noted that many of the recent attacks perpetrated by the Fulanis have stemmed from long-standing disagreements with various communities. For instance, Mayah, (2016) in Oli, Ibekwe, Nwankwo (2018) report that a Fulani leader alleged that the massacre of Agatu people by Fulanis was a reprisal attack against the killing of their prominent son by the people of Agatu in April 2013 who stole his cows. Mostly in the middle-belt, the conflict was found to have stemmed from a long history of feud over farm lands and herding. In Plateau State, preexisting communal conflicts such as that between the Hausa/Fulani and Beroms (alongside other natives) over

the ownership of Jos and political tussles have sustained the violence between herdsmen and native farmers

Climate change is one of the major causes of conflicts between farmers and herdsmen. This is so because when there is unfavourable weather the herdsmen will be compelled to leave their original habitation to another area for greener pastures. Gleick (2021) highlights how climate-induced migration forces herders into farmlands, intensifying disputes over land and water resources. And lending further support to this, opines that climate change has been tipped as the greatest single factor to induce migration and population displacement. This, Plateau State which has a better rainfall and vegetation continue to witness the influx of nomadic herdsmen, culminating in clashes by the two groups over grazing and farming lands

Access to water is an important factor for human and animal survival, but where users compete due to its scarcity, conflict sets in. Fresh water scarcity seems to be an under-estimated and under discussed resource issue facing the world today it is obvious that the world's water demand grows every year in order to meet up with increasing population. Exacerbated by climate change, fresh water scarcity is creating security concerns in some parts of sub-Saharan Africa, especially in the semi-arid region (Audu, 2013). Ofem and Inyang (2014) observe that contamination of stream by cattle have led to clashes in Yakurr, Cross River State, Nigeria

Impact of Farmers-Herders Conflict on Women's Economic Livelihood

The fact that Nigeria is saddled with farmers-herders' conflicts cannot be overemphasized. However, what is most worrisome is the little attention being paid to its impact on women. The term "women" is purposefully used because the focus of this study is on their role in environments of instability, fragility, and conflict, rather than on broader gender issues. A study carried out by Alawemo and Muterera (2010) on armed conflicts in Nigeria using Jos, Plateau State, as their reference point notes the vulnerability of women and children in conflict situations. According to them these conflicts have led to extensive destruction of lives and properties culmination

in serious poverty on the part of women. Poverty in this context simply means extreme poverty that is living in an environment without food security, clean water, sanitation, basic health service, literacy and basic income. A thematic discussion of the impact of farmers-herders conflict can be seen below.

Agriculture is a primary source of livelihood for many women in Plateau State, providing food security and income. However, the farmers-herders conflict has severely disrupted farming activities. Women farmers often face the destruction of crops, loss of farmland, and displacement due to violent clashes (Shamima & Kyoko, 2014). Supporting this assertion, Olusola (2018) also posits that the loss of farmlands is a major economic disruptions. Many are unable to cultivate or harvest crops, leading to food shortages and financial instability. Additionally, fear of attacks prevents women from engaging in farming activities, exacerbating poverty and reducing agricultural output (Thomas, 2009, Bauda, 2022).

Trading, particularly in agricultural produce, cattle fats/milk and local markets, has historically been a significant income source for women in Plateau State. However, the conflict has disrupted supply chains, making it difficult for women to transport and sell their goods (Ifemeje, 2012). Worthy of note is that fact that insecurity along major trade routes discourages movement, leading to reduced sales and income. Markets in conflict-prone areas in Plateau State have also been destroyed or abandoned, forcing women to seek alternative, often less profitable, means of livelihood. Olusola (2018) in buttressing this, opines that women surveyed, had lost their primary sources of income due to conflicts, with restricted market access Consequently, many female traders struggle to sustain their businesses, leading to economic hardship (International Crisis Group, 2018).

Small-scale enterprises, including handicrafts, food processing, and livestock rearing in Plateau State have also suffered due to the ongoing conflict. Women running these businesses face difficulties in accessing raw materials, maintaining production, and reaching

customers (Abubakar, 2012). Many enterprises have been forced to shut down due to insecurity, leading to job losses and financial distress. Additionally, displacement has uprooted women from their business locations, making it challenging to rebuild their enterprises in new areas. The lack of government support and limited access to credit further compounds the struggles of women entrepreneurs (Plateau State Peace Building Agency, 2019).

Furthermore, with the loss of male breadwinners due to killings and displacement, many women have assumed the role of heads of households. Widowed women must support their families financially while also caring for the injured, orphaned, and elderly (Ifemeje, 2012). The increasing burden on women has heightened economic insecurity and limited their ability to recover from conflict-induced hardships. In addition the farmers-herders conflict in Plateau State has had a profound and gendered impact on economic livelihoods, particularly for women. The destruction of agricultural and trade resources, increased caregiving responsibilities, and deepening poverty underscore the urgent need for comprehensive policy interventions.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on environmental scarcity theory developed by Homer-Dixon in 1994. The theory argues that scarcity of resources due to environmental degradation, population growth, and unequal distribution of resources can contribute to social instability and conflicts between resource users. It states further that high population in many developing countries is by caused the scarcity of four environmental resources which include fresh water, cropland, forests and fish. Agyemang (2017) opined that the scarcity of these resources as a result of misuse, over-use of degradation, population growth, climate change and access to these resources leads to competition over the scarce ecological resources among groups, and may under certain circumstances trigger off conflicts. The conflict between herders and farmers experienced in North-Central States and Plateau State in particular has been driven by the scarcity of land, and competition between the farmers

and herdsmen to ensure their viability in the area. The scarcity of land is due to climate change and shrinking ecological space, human and cattle population explosion, and resource depletion. In the light of this assumption when either farmers or herders have limited access to these resources, conflict may become the order of the day. In Plateau State for example, land is a scarce commodity that almost all families are confronted with due to population growth that has led to the fragmentation of family land as traditions and culture demand. Therefore, when herders who probably have stayed on the native lands do not have access to such lands, or land resources, including water, it often times results to violent conflict. The conflicts do not just lead to displacement of families, women who take up farming in rural communities or engage in other form of business loss their sources of livelihood because the environment becomes hostile and unfriendly for human habitation.

2.3 Empirical Review

The impact of farmers-herders' conflicts have been widely studied in extant literature with no consensus on the extent and dimension of the impacts. Mbah *et al.*, (2020) examined the effects of farmer-herder conflicts on women's economic participation in North-Central Nigeria, using Plateau and Nasarawa States. The study used purposive sampling to select 350 women and collected data through focus group discussions and semi structured interviews. Thematic content analysis and logistic regression were employed, and findings showed that affected women experienced a 50% decline in farm productivity and had to shift towards informal labor due to insecurity. The study concluded that conflicts push women into less stable jobs, reducing their long-term financial security. The strength of this study lies on the fact that it focuses on farmers-herders' conflicts, but while the scholars examined how it affects women empowerment, this work focuses on how the conflicts affect the economic livelihood of women in Plateau State.

Examining the socio-economic challenges faced by women as a result of these conflicts, Oladeji *et al.*, (2022) conducted a study on gendered impacts of farmer-

herder conflicts in rural Nigeria, which focused on three conflict-prone Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Plateau State. The study surveyed 500 women using simple random sampling and collected data through structured questionnaires and key informant interviews. Factor analysis and chi-square tests were applied, revealing that women in conflict zones experienced heightened food insecurity, restricted mobility, and gender-based violence, leading to reduced household economic contributions. The study concluded that conflicts exacerbate socio-economic Inequalities and make women more vulnerable to poverty. This study is relevant to the present research because it concentrated on farmers-herders' conflicts and how it affects rural women, it failed to identified the specific areas of economic livelihood of women affected by the conflicts, and while the scholars followed the quantitative approach, this study adopts the qualitative method.

In a related study, Suchi and Musa (2021) studied women and children in conflict: The case of farmer-herder clashes in Plateau State. The aim was to examine how the conflicts affected women's economic roles and children's education in Plateau State. The study targeted displaced women and children in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, selecting 300 respondents through stratified sampling. Data was gathered using surveys and case studies, while descriptive statistics and ANOVA were used for analysis. The findings indicated that displacement led to increased child labor and early marriages, as women struggled to sustain their households financially and concluded that there is an urgent need for economic empowerment programs for displaced women. The strength of this study is predicated on the fact that it assessed how herders-farmers conflicts affect women which is a variable in this research, but while the scholars' used ANOVA as techniques of analysis, this research used analyzed the views of scholars in reviewed literature in domesticating the impact of the conflicts on women livelihoods in Plateau State.

3. Methodology

This research employed the qualitative research approach, making use of secondary data. The data were sourced from journals, textbooks, online daily newspapers and other online publications. The narrative literature review was employed to summarize, discuss and compare and synthesize researchers' perspectives on impact of farmers-herders' conflicts on women economic livelihood in Plateau State. This method was considered appropriate because the aim of the study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of key concepts, theories and perspectives, rather than to empirically analyze data or apply systematic coding procedures. Thus, using this approach, relevant literature was identified through searchers of academic databases such as Google Scholar among others. The review was critically examined and systematically synthesized to identify recurring ideas and debates on herders-farmers conflicts, by relying on comparative and interpretive analysis to organize the literature into coherent themes and to highlight gaps in existing research. Therefore, by integrating findings from previous studies, this review provides a structured overview of the current state of knowledge and establishes a theoretical foundation for future research.

4. Conclusion

The conflict between farmers and herders in Plateau State in particular and Nigeria at large has persisted due to multiple interconnected factors. A major cause is the invasion of farms and destruction of crops, where cattle graze on farmlands, leading to clashes. The competition over land resource is intensified by a growing population and shrinking grazing reserves, exacerbated by environmental degradation and poor land management. Cattle rustling, particularly in the northern regions, fuels insecurity, with stolen livestock increasing tensions between communities Ethnic and religious differences have further deepened the conflict, as politicians and ethnic jingoists manipulate these differences for political gains. Additionally, long-standing disagreements have led to cycles of reprisals and sustained violence. Climate change has forced herders to migrate in search of pasture,

increasing encounters with farmers, while freshwater scarcity has intensified disputes over access to vital water sources. Other factors include weak institutional enforcement, poor land tenure systems, and declining traditional conflict resolution mechanism

The conflict has had devastating effects on women, as they bear the brunt of displacement, poverty and economic instability. Many women have lost their husbands and children, leaving them as sole breadwinners. Destruction of farmlands and homes has pushed them into deeper poverty, as they lose their primary means of livelihood. Displacement has also forced many into Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, where they struggle to survive. The conflict has disrupted their trades/access to markets and small scale enterprises, reduced income opportunities, and increased food insecurity. Women who were previously engaged in farming, trading, and small businesses now face limited economic opportunities, compelling some to resort to exploitative work including survival sex, making them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other health risks. Furthermore, the rise in gender-based violence and forced marriages among displaced communities worsens their socio-economic conditions.

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5. Recommendations

The following have been recommended among others as strategies that can help in addressing the menace of farmers-herders' conflicts in order to enhance the economic livelihood of women:

- i. The Plateau State Government should establish an integrated land and resource management and peacebuilding framework that combines land-use planning, climate-resilient water development that include provision of shared water infrastructure such as solar-powered boreholes. This if done will reduce resource competition, mistrust, and violent conflict, thereby improving the economic livelihoods of women.
- ii. Government in collaboration with the traditional institutions should establish community-based peace and resource-sharing committees that include farmers and herders to manage land and water use fairly, in order to prevent violence, and protect women economic livelihoods such as farming, trade, income, employment, and access to productive assets.

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