

**A STUDY OF EFFECTS OF FARMER-HERDER CONFLICT ON WOMEN IN
DEMSA LGA OF ADAMAWA STATE**

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ABSTRACT

The persistent farmer-herder conflicts in Demsa local government area of Adamawa State have had very debilitating negative consequences on the pastoralist and farming communities in the area. Many lives and property have been destroyed, many people displaced and farming activities disrupted. Most troublesome is that negative impact that the protracted conflict has had and continues to have on women who are the engine room of the economy of the area. Women have been killed, raped, beaten, displaced from their farms and places of abode by the militias operating in the area. This study therefore, investigated the effect of the conflict on women in Demsa local government area. The study is descriptive in nature and employed purposive sampling technique to select 29 key informants interviewed (KII), among who were also selected the 25 persons that were part of the five-focus group discussion (FGD) sessions held. Five persons each were interviewed in each of the FGD sessions. Data obtained were subjected to content analysis. Based on the analysis carried out, the following findings were revealed: the various effects of the farmer-herder conflicts on women in Demsa LGA of Adamawa State include, the killing of women, rape, their livelihoods are destroyed (crops, animals and other items), they experience posttraumatic stress disorders (PTSDs), they are socially dislocated and separated from their children, husbands and other relations and their economic activities such as farming, trading are destroyed among others. It was also found that the responses of state and non-state responses to alleviate protect.

KEYWORDS: Herders, Farmers, Conflict, Women, Land, Government

INTRODUCTION

One major problem confronting world peace today is the manifestation of conflicts in different dimensions across the globe. From Europe to America, Africa to Asia, conflicts are common phenomena. Conflict has been defined in different ways by different scholars. For instance, Ekong (2003) defined conflict as that form of social interaction in which the actors seek to obtain scarce reward by eliminating or weakening their contenders. Folger *et al.* (2009) defined conflict as the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals.

Nigeria has experienced and is still experiencing conflicts of grave proportions among several ethnic and religious communities across the country. In recent times, resource induced conflicts have been occurring between farmers and pastoralists in the country, with the North Central and North East of Nigeria suffering more of such conflicts. Adisa (2012) has argued that the farmers-herdsmen conflict has remained the most preponderant resource-use conflict in Nigeria. But tensions have grown over the past decade, with increasingly violent flare-ups spreading throughout central and southern states; incidents have occurred in at least 22 of the country's 36 states (International Crisis Group, 2017). According to one report, in 2016 over 2,000 people were killed and tens of thousands displaced in Benue and Kaduna states alone. According to Abbas (2009) rightly observed that the major sources of conflicts between the Fulani pastoralists (to be used interchangeably with "herders" or "herdsmen") and farmers shows that land related issues, especially on grazing fields, account for the highest percentage of the conflicts. In other words, struggles over the control of economically viable lands cause more tensions and violent conflicts between farmers and the Fulani pastoralists.

Social and economic factors continue to provoke violent conflicts among the Fulani pastoralists and farmers. These changes have increased confrontations between farmers and herders, leading to violent conflict, deaths, forced displacement and migration, erosion of inter-communal relationships, as well as the destruction of agricultural and livestock outputs (c, Abuja, 2015). These conflicts have constituted serious threats to the means of survival and

livelihoods of both the farmers and pastoralists and what both groups are tenaciously protecting. For instance, in the process of the violent conflict against women do not often report as Eze-Anaba (2010) observes that most forms of violence directed specifically against women in Nigeria seem to be met with silence not only by the state but also by much of the human rights community. Amnesty International (2005) thus observes that where a victim summons the courage to report to law enforcement agents, the issue is trivialized and termed a “private matter”. This research therefore makes a bold step to bring to the fore the effects of the farmer-herder conflict to the fore. Women are the most affected in the protracted conflicts between the farming and pastoralists communities, with many of them displaced, widowed, and generally suffering economic, social and psychological violence in several communities in Demsa local government area of Adamawa State, which is the focal point of this study. This study, therefore investigated the effects of farmer-herder conflict on women in Demsa local government area of Adamawa State.

Historical, tensions between Nigeria's pastoralist Fulani and settled indigenous farmers have intensified in recent years, with dwindling natural resources and land availability greatly contributing to the ongoing, escalating conflict in the country (Okello, *et. al.*, 2014.). The intermittent conflict between the farmers and pastoralists often results in devastating consequences on the affected communities, as life and property are usually destroyed and massive displacement of persons from their communities also occur. Women are by far the highest category of persons affected by conflicts. According to International Organisation for Migrants (2002), while women and girls endure the same trauma as the rest of the population – bombings, famines, epidemics, mass executions, torture, arbitrary imprisonment, forced migration, ethnic cleansing, threats and intimidation -- they are also targets of specific forms of violence and abuse in conflict situations. Why women are mostly affected during violent crisis? What steps are usually taken by state and non-state actors to either prevent or alleviate the suffering of women during or after conflicts?

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Most research works on women in conflict situations are those that affected in theaters of civil wars, violent religious, ethnic and community conflicts. However, it is believed that gender-based violence is of “epidemic proportion (Convention on the Eradication of all forms of Discriminations against Women, 1997). There appears to a dearth of literature on the effect of violent conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in Adamawa State. This study, therefore, investigated the effect of farmer-herder conflict on women in Demsa local government area of Adamawa State.

The increasing number of reports of violence at this occupational boundary makes understanding herders-farmers conflict on women and its effect to their social, psychological and economically need an urgent task. The study examined the effect on women on two different groups on land usage and access to natural resources which were basically the main cause of the conflict, so as to enable further understanding of the issue from the viewpoint of the conflict actors. This will complement the efforts of the other researchers. This being the case, it is hoped that the study has provided the Government, Non-governmental organizations and the general public with relevant and up-to-date information on effect of farmer-herder conflict on women and efforts of various institutions towards the resolutions of conflicts between them.

From the foregoing, the study is to investigate the effects of violent farmer-herder conflicts on women in Demsa Local Government Area of Adamawa State using the following specific objectives:

- Examine the effects of farmer-herder conflicts on women in Demsa LGA of Adamawa State.
- Investigate the responses of state and non-state responses to alleviate the effects of violent farmer-herder conflict on women in Demsa LGA.
- Assess the effectiveness of the responses of state and non-state in alleviating the sufferings of women affected in farmer-herder conflict in the study area.

Ethnographic Background to Pastoralism in Nigeria

The Fulbe origin also known as Fulani are a mass inhabitant widely dispersed in all of Africa, but most predominant in West Africa. The Fulani people are descendants from Middle East and North Africa. However, the history of the Fulani origin began with the Berbers of North Africa around the 8th or 11th century AD (Anter, 2015). Over a millennium ago from AD 900 - 1900, they spread to most parts of West Africa and to some areas of Central Africa (Anter, 2015). Although, these uprisings began as holy wars (jihad), after their triumph they followed the basic standard of Fulani ethnic dominance in most West African States. Most of the Fulani people are nomadic in nature, herding sheep, goats and cattle across the dry grass lands of their environs and making them the main pastoral nomadic group in the world. The main Fulani sub groups in Nigeria are: Fulbe Gombe, Fulbe Adamawa, Fulbe Sokoto, Fulbe Mbororo, and Fulbe Borgu (Kasarachi, 2016).

Antonio and Silvia (2009) described Pastoralists as people who live mostly in dry, remote areas. Their livelihoods depend on their intimate knowledge of the surrounding ecosystem and on the well-being of their livestock. According to them, pastoral systems take many forms and are adapted to particular natural, political and economic environment, and the key feature qualifying pastoralism is Mobility. The Fulbe (another name for the Fulani) and the arable farmers among whom they move, have an interdependent relationship based on the exchange of dairy products for grain, and a market for the animals that must be periodically sold to provide cash for domestic purposes, such as cloth or marriage payments. Moreover, in many regions, Fulbe management strategies depend on access to cereal crop residues - something arable farmers permit because of the perceived advantages of manure as fertilizer. If Fulbe herders are unable to build up exchange relations with the farming communities, they can only survive by becoming sedentary, by flexible movement patterns that involve exploiting new arable communities every year, or by intimidation of the farmers. The major source of animal protein is the cattle which are in the hands of Pastoral Fulani's (Ajala, 2000). The fact that the Savannah zones of Nigeria have abundance of grasses and forages and also

the absence of the deadly cattle disease called Trypanosomiasis make the zone conducive for rearing cattle (Ibrahim *et. al.*, 2014).

Cattle Herding System

Having raised livestock for centuries, the Fulani have evolved a herding system that withstands time, weather, social change, and government intervention. The movement of the Fulani over the years has led to a pastoral calendar in which the location and the grazing habits of the Fulani can be predicted (Iro, 1994). The name Fulani has become synonymous with grazing and cattle ownership. The *Fulbeness, pulaaku*, is determined by the extent of Fulani involvement in herding. The primary occupation of the Fulani is herding, followed by farming. Less than a tenth of the Fulani have jobs other than herding or farming.

Land Use and Migration

Accounts of Fulani pastoralists moving southwards into Nigeria's sub-humid „Middle Belt“ zone appear as early as the 1820s; however, tsetse flies and the associated trypanosomiasis disease necessitated return northwards into the semi-arid zone during the rainy season. This gradual southern movement has been attributed to the creation of dairy markets by Hausa traders and the relative security of the British colonial period, when violence related to the trans-Saharan slave trade was curtailed (Migration was also seen as a way to avoid the hated *jangali* (cattle tax) imposed by the British with the introduction of trypanocidal drugs further enabling pastoralist cattle herds to access the high-quality grazing land in the southern sub-humid zone (Blench, 1994).

Nigeria's Grazing Reserve Act of 1964.

The Nigerian Grazing Reserve Act of 1964 was passed as an initial attempt to improve Fulani access to grazing land for their cattle, simultaneously encouraging sedentarisation in order to address existing conflicts between farming and grazing communities and improve provision of essential amenities to pastoralist families. In a broader sense, it was expected that the policy would help address some of the wider constraints facing livestock development in Nigeria at the time, such as disease control and market supply (Ingawa *et al.*, 1989).

Some Causes of Cattle Herder-Crop Farmer Conflicts

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. For example, increases in the herd sizes, due to improved conditions of the cattle, compelled the cattle herders to seek for more pastures beyond their limited range. Climate change has constituted a great threat by putting great pressures on the land and thus provoking conflicts between them. However, improvements in human health and population have enhanced a much greater pressure on land. Since the 1980s therefore, there has been a marked expansion of cultivation of the *fadama* (riverine and valley-bottom) areas. This means that both the farmers and cattle herders have engaged in fierce struggles for access to such valuable lands which, more often than not, result in increased conflicts and violence (Abbas, 2009).

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The sampling techniques that were used in this study are the purposive sampling technique and stratified random sampling technique. According to Nworgu, (1991:26), purposive sampling technique involves a process of selecting specific elements which satisfy some pre-determined criteria. Similarly, Kothari (2003) opines that purposive sampling is applied where the researcher intends to pick subjects that satisfy a given criterion. It is also based entirely on the judgment of the researcher in that a sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of any given population. A total of 29 people were selected for the study using krejcie and morgan (1970) technique. This will serve as a reasonable representation of the population and such outcome can be generalised on the population. The first stage involved the purposive selection of three Districts in the Local Government Areas, one from each of the three Districts. This selection was based on the frequency of occurrence of farmer-herder conflict and its effects on Women. These District selected has recorded frequent clashes between herders and farmers. They are: Borrong, Bille and Bali in Demsa Local Government Area.

Methodology

The main sources of data for this study were primary and secondary. The secondary and primary sources and were streamlined to meet the information requirements of this study. According to Francis (1976:288) primary data are those data obtained for the solution of the specific problem at hand. It is also the data that is obtained directly from persons or subjects. This source of data is very useful because the data arising there from are usually target-tailored. Since certain kinds of information can be obtained only by direct contact with the persons who possess the desired information, this source of data is indispensable to any original research. Hence, the primary source of data for this study was field survey using questionnaires and interviews as the main sources of data gathering.

Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

In-depth interviews (IDIs) are sometimes called life history interviews. This is because they are the favoured approach for any life history research. In this type of interview, the researcher attempts to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewees' points of view or situation (Dawson, 2002). Both IDIs and FGDs were conducted for identified persons by the researcher and two research assistants hired by the researcher from Demsa Local Government Area. Those interviewed were people who were familiar with the subject-matter under investigation. The interviewees' assisted in providing data on their personal experiences. Major stakeholders in the in the farmer-herder conflict were also interacted with and they offered very insightful data on the issue being investigated. These interviews stimulated discussions on how the "interviewee frames and understands issues and they also assisted in explaining events, patterns, and forms of behaviour" (Seidman 2005: 314).

In all, twenty-nine KIIs were held with the selected interviewees, which are presented below:

Table 1: KII Sample Group

S/no	Group	Sample Number
1	Representative of Farmers	5
2	Representatives of Fulani pastoralists	7
3	Religious leaders	2
4	Community leaders	2
5	Officials of non-governmental organizations	3
6	Women leaders	4
7	Local government officials	3
8	Security personnel	3
	Total:	20

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2022

A total of 5 FGDs were also held for women, farmers, pastoralists, community and religious leaders.

Table 2: FGD Sample Group

S/No	Group	Sample Number
1	Representative of Farmers	5
2	Representatives of Fulani pastoralists	5
3	Religious leaders	5
4	Community leaders	5
5	Women	5
	Total:	25

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2022

Discussion of Findings

Data sourced from the field was analyzed through the use of tables based on simple percentages. Rate of focus group discussion is 500 selected in 3 District Borong, Bili and Bille

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related to 9 villages in the district where interview was taken for 500 respondents across the nine different Villages 370 of them were retrieved for analysis. From the FGD it was found that 90.4% (250) were female's farmers and 9.6% (70) 370, who responded to the questions respectively. However, these socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents have no negative effect on the responses given since the research has nothing to do with gender inequality as presented on table 4 below.

Age distributions were in four categories. 51 respondents representing 20% were between the ages of 20 and 30 years, (150) were between the ages of 31 and 40 years, 45% (120) were between the ages of 41 and 50 years and 25% (49) were between the ages of 51 and 60 years. It should be observed from the table below that the larger percentage of the respondents are youths between the ages of 31-40 years and 41-50 years which are actively involved in farming activities. It means that if farming activities are stable and vibrant, our youths will be preoccupied in activities that will enhance the economy.

Qualification is not a yardstick per se for engaging in a farming activity except for those working in the government establishment. All the same, one needs a requisite knowledge so as to enhance his business. That is why only a fraction of the respondents 4.2% did not have any of the conventional qualification. The table below shows that the respondents with school certificate are 47% (170), those with NCE/OND/Diploma are 23% (100), those with first degree are 21% (40), those with MSc 10.2% (25), those with PhD 2.8% (6), while those that do not have any qualification or have qualifications that are not conventional are 4.2% (29).

In sum, it was found that farmer-herder conflicts on women in Demsa LGA of Adamawa State had significant negative impact on women, girl child and young male adult. These impacts include, the killing, rape, their livelihoods are destroyed (crops, animals and other items). Additionally, these vulnerable group experience post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSDs) and are also socially dislocation and separation from their children, husbands and other relations and their economic activities such as farming, trading are destroyed among others. It was also found that the responses of state and non-state responses to alleviate protect.

Conclusion

From the above, it can be seen that the clashes between farmers and herdsmen result in harm (both mentally and psychologically for not only women and the more vulnerable in the society. In view of this, the underlisted are recommended to mitigate this ugly situation.

Recommendation

In view of the reviews, surveys and findings gotten, the following are the recommendations:

- i. Government and its security agencies should develop a multi-dimensional approach in mediating the Herders and Farmers Conflict such as the lethal approach i.e attacks on the farmers, and developmental approach such as deliberate efforts to enhance the quality of lives of the people and the environment. Meaning that as the security agency mediates or settles the conflict; developmental programmes should be put in place to eradicate poverty and illiteracy from the populace. They should be efforts to intensify civic education at grass root levels so that people will have high sense of patriotism and they will not turn their back to fight their government.
- ii. Settling Herders and Farmers Conflict of whatever type should be from its infancy. Herders and Farmers Conflict started so little such that if it was addressed or fought earlier, the issue would have been conquered early. There should be improvement in emergency responses. The Conflict conquered several villages before coming to Demsa. If there was a vibrant emergency response mechanism in place, those villages and Demsa would have been secured.
- iii. The security personnel and their operations should as a matter of urgency be technologically inclined and equipped. This will help track the bad elements among the populace and in their hideouts and farming activities in Demsa who suffered losses should be assisted in form of compensations or interest-free loans so that they can have a better footing in their farming.

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