

Farmers-Herders' Conflict in Nigeria: Causes, Consequences and Resolution Mechanisms

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ABSTRACT

Existing literature has shown the nature of farmers-herders' conflict in the Nigerian socio-political landscape. However, special attention has not been paid to the causes, consequences and resolution mechanism at the countryside. It becomes imperative to critically examine both the structural and processual variables responsible for the conflict which are essential to ending the conflict to avoid future loss of lives. Using secondary data, this paper views the structural and processual conflict variables from the framework of conflict theory and political ecology approach. It argues that the causes of conflicts between farmers and herdsman were observably due to population increase and human development needs coupled with the collapse of the land tenure system. Also, the consequences were noted in the incessant clashes involving herdsman and farmers in Nigeria which have resulted into political instability and also a threat to national security. In addition, the resolution mechanisms for farmers-herders' conflict often involve mediating disputes between conflicting parties and facilitating dialogue to promote understanding and cooperation. This paper however concludes that sustainable peace between farmers and herders requires a holistic approach that considers the social, economic, environmental, and cultural aspects of the conflict.

Keywords: Farmers-Herders' Conflict, Resolution Mechanisms, Conflict Theory and Political Ecology Approach

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria and the larger West African region are accustomed to numerous wars (Blench 2010; Abbass 2012; Okeke, 2014). These include disputes pertaining to politics, religion, the environment, ethnicity, and resources. Notably, there has been a correlation in recent years between the farmer-herder conflict and a rise in conflicts in Nigeria (Olaniyan et al., 2015; Olayoku, 2014; Okeke, 2014). Agricultural producers and pastoralist communities should not be forgotten. They used to have a cordial and steady working relationship that allowed them to coexist for many years. It is clear from their mutual dependence that both groups are necessary to the other's survival. It established the standard for communication and resulted in balanced growth (Shettima and Tar, 2008: 163). Though there have been issues between the pastoralists and agricultural producers that have been peacefully addressed, there is a long history of economic ties between the two groups.

For many years, herders and sedentary farmers in Nigeria have had a friendly and mutually beneficial partnership (Aniche & Ngwu, 2019). When disagreements and arguments arose during such idyllic times, they were settled peacefully using customary community peacebuilding mechanisms (Lamidi & Olaleye, 2023). But in recent times, disputes in Nigeria between farmers and herders have taken on a hazardous aspect, continuing to be one of the biggest obstacles facing the country as it strives for sustainable growth. Adisa (2012) correctly pointed out that the major cause of resource-use conflict in Nigeria continues to be the conflict between farmers and herders. However, in addition to other considerations, economic, social, and political issues have been blamed for these disputes. Conflicting causes forced cattle herders to look for new pastures outside of their restricted area, such as increases in herd numbers brought on by better cattle conditions (Abbass, 2014). Climate change and population growth, among other factors, have also posed serious risks by placing significant strain on the land and so inciting disputes between farmers and herders, making arable land a rare resource (Abdulbaqi & Ariemu, 2017). According to Blench (2010), unauthorized farm invasions and crop devastation by cattle—especially during planting season and right after harvest—are the most commonly cited reasons for disputes between farmers and cow herders. However, Abbass (2012) identified the main causes of disputes between farmers and Fulani herders, or herdsmen. This study demonstrated that the causes, effects, and methods of resolution—particularly on grazing fields—are what lead to the majority of disputes.

Shettima and Tar (2008: 141) state that one of the pastoralists' activities is moving their animals to graze on farmlands owned by crop farmers. The farmers need the pastoralists' protein for daily consumption in the form of dairy products, and they also need their manure for field fertilization. Adeleke (2018) also pointed out that interactions with sedentary farmers shape the pastoralist group's ability to survive. It follows that each group requires water, land, feed, and other land usage for their economic activity, making the interdependent relationship obvious. Sadly, several conflicts that have arisen throughout the areas and developed into widespread violence, fatalities, and internal displacement of people have cut short this type of connection that has existed for generations (Doyin, 2017 & Brottem, 2019). The usage of land for grazing is a major source of conflict; farmers who use the same land for crops may object to herders grazing their cattle on wide expanses of land (Akinkuolie, 2018). This may result in agricultural damage, disputes over resources and land, and other negative outcomes. Peace has become rare in practically every senatorial zone of Nigeria due to the ongoing violent confrontations between farmers and herders (Okoro, 2018). The story has shifted from depicting tranquil towns to ones where residents are always afraid since assaults are now commonplace (Akorede, 2018). Although it is evident from the literature that the government, non-governmental organizations, the community, the chief, elders in the community, groups, etc., have all contributed significantly to the development of peace between Nigerian farmers and herders.

Alhassan (2013) listed the underlying factors for the farmers-herders' conflict which often resulted from the herders' migration southward, the rivalry for limited resources, the breakdown of the farmer-herder connection, or any other of the structural circumstances. The issue at hand is that there is an increase in violence, which makes farmers want to defend their property, while herders resort to aggressive tactics to protect their livestock while they graze (Oppong, 2015). In an attempt to defend themselves against the systematic attacks by cattle rustlers while grazing, pastoralists have responded by distributing tiny rifles and carrying illicit weapons, which has resulted in the deaths of Fulani herders and their animals (Abugu & Onuoba, 2015). But things get worse since both gangs keep wreaking havoc in the town and putting people's lives in jeopardy (Ortserga, 2012). While the Nigerian government has shown a lack of ability to end the violence and offer enduring peace to the many communities that have lost a great deal of people and property due to the fighting (Tukur, 2013). In order to put a stop to the conflict and prevent more deaths, it becomes necessary to thoroughly evaluate the structural and procedural factors that are causing the conflicts vis-à-vis its consequences and resolution mechanisms.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conflict Theory

According to Schrich (2004), a conflict is a significant dispute, quarrel, struggle, or major confrontation of wants or viewpoints. According to Vanderlin (2005), the threat aims to prevent or restrict one party's access to a certain resource or objective. Land disputes in the grasslands between crop farmers and grazers might be an example of this. This is frequently the case in situations when they graze and cultivate in the same areas (Odoh & Chigozie, 2012). The conflict theory identifies coercion, division, animosity, dissent conflict, mal-integration, and change as traits of a society. According to Klein & Ritti (1980), conflict arises from a variety of factors, such as disparities in tasks, values, attitudes, and priorities as groups compete for control over limited resources. Conflict can occur when group leaders have different viewpoints or when one group prefers to take advantage of the other, according to Adeniyi & Olaniyi (2008). Personality conflicts can cause arguments in groups and split the society

into various factions. According to Tonah (2006), conflict theory sees ongoing hostility over limited resources as the main reason why economic actors fight. Conflict theorists such as Vanderlin (2005), Abbass (2014), and Kwagha (2018) contend that the following characteristics are shared by economic agents: (1) there is some form of contact between the parties; (2) the parties perceive opposing viewpoints; and (3) one of the parties always seeks to resolve contradictions that already exist.

There is a border separating any farming system, like the herding of cattle on the move, from the wider system that is the environment (Mwamfupe, 2015). The bounds of the bigger system are represented by the border. Nomadic herders and farmers are facing increased competition for access to fresh water, cropland, pastures, and rangeland usage in general (Adisa, 2012). The many forms of conflict in ties between farmers and nomadic herders are clearly distinguished from one another. Similarly, Blench (2010) has distinguished between several kinds of conflicts in farmer-nomadic relationships. He distinguishes between conflicts of interest, violent conflicts, and disagreements between people and groups. According to Tonah (2006), a dispute is defined as an argument between two or more people or groups, but a violent confrontation results in mayhem, the death and destruction of people and animals as a result of a dispute. Conversely, a conflict of interest is defined as when several parties adopt divergent opinions and concerns; this typically manifests as a nonviolent struggle for control of resources within a certain region (Okoli, 2014). Differences between farmers and herders are perceived as an ethnic conflict between the two groups as well as a conflict for resources.

Conflicts between herder and farmer groups are sometimes classified as ethnic conflict since they have highly diverse values, customs, physical qualities, and cultural traits (Muhammad, Ismaila & Bibi, 2015). Members of the group have a strong sense of belonging that is centered on their shared economic interests as well as the defense of the organization's values, culture, and authority. Despite being a minority in their host towns, Fulani nomadic cattle rearers have a distinct culture and a strong feeling of camaraderie (Francis, Bawa & Haruna, 2019). They are frequently cut off from the farming community. Conflict between them and the host community's farming population is seen as having ethnic color in these situations. Both the theory and the context of this study make this implicit. In Nigeria, particularly in Benue State, conflicts between crop farmers and nomadic cattle herders frequently result in significant losses of agricultural, material, and human resources (Nwakanna & Boroh, 2019). In order to achieve the objectives of agricultural development programs, it is crucial to comprehend the causes and consequences of conflict between nomads and farmers in host communities. Thus, the paper becomes significant to enhancing professional commitment to this action center which is often interrogated by the research professionals and extension workers.

By removing causes of discontent, conflict aids in the stabilization and integration of members in loosely organized groups. Internal conflict is a way for opposing interests to be expressed and their relative strength to be determined in an encounter. According to Atagher (2006), conflict highlights the points of disagreement and offers ideas for coming to an agreement and achieving balance. It appears that the Tiv agrarian villages in Benue State, Nigeria, have a system in place where farmers and grazers are connected in the rural regions. The grazing lands are regarded as government property, and the government may appropriate them at any moment for any other development goals if doing so serves the greater good of the public interest (Akorede, 2018; Abdullahi, 2019). The Fulbe were pastoral people who used to travel around with their cattle like nomads, only settling down for a while in areas with plenty of pasture. Due to population pressure, they are now more sedentary and practice transhumance, which has decreased the amount of grazing pasture (Goke, 2018). Grazers face a variety of challenges when they settle down, first from inside because they find it hard to give up their vast grazing habits and, second, from neighboring groups who assert rights to the land and a superiority complex because they were the original settlers.

The Political Ecology Approach

According to Abugu and Onuoba's (2015) theory, political ecology contrasts ecological issues with a broadly defined political economy. Rather than removing ecological concerns from social and political spheres, it shows how environmental science has both social and political roots. As previously stated by Vanderlin (2005), the integration of political economics and ecology concerns is justified by demonstrating the interdependence of social and political factors that underlie the causes, experiences, and handling of environmental issues. Although there are many different ways to study political ecology, Schirch (2004) distilled these approaches into four main concerns: i. degradation and marginalization (i.e., explaining environmental change in a more comprehensive political and economic context); ii. environmental conflict (i.e., explaining environmental conflict and access in a more comprehensive struggle involving indices such as gender, class, race, and identity); iii. conservation and control (i.e., explaining issues within conservation practice, as well as the political and economic exclusion of environmental conservation); and iv. environmental identity and social movement.

Ofooku and Isife (2009), who assert that political ecology includes the components and systems of culture, power, political economy discourse, and history, likewise hold this opinion. Therefore, capitalizing on this

reasoning, Schirch (2004) shows that political ecology as a whole. It outlines empirical, research-based investigations that take explicit consideration of power relations into account in order to explain connections in the state and evolution of social and environmental systems. It looks into the root causes of social and environmental issues. It emphasizes how environmental systems are fundamentally political. It also highlights the ways in which the economic and political structures affect the environment. Therefore, political ecology proposes that policy shortcomings or the lack of a framework for socio-ecological resilience are the root causes of disputes between farmers and herders. The hypothesis aids farmers and herders in lessening the effects of the world's fastest population growth as well as the unfavorable weather brought on by climate change and global warming. In order to get fresh water and vegetation for their herd, this forces herders to relocate from the far north into the Middle Belt region. Due to farm invasion and consequent crop damage, as well as the lack of effective social and economic institutions (whether traditional or contemporary) in a given region, they come into touch with farmers as a result (Inyang, Effiong & Ekwutosi, 2021).

There are three key levels at which the State has been heavily involved in land issues. This results from the State's failure to develop a framework for socio-ecological resilience in order to lessen the effects of climate change. First, instead of the widespread land use that is common in conflict regions, there is a lack of policy to support intensive agricultural land use that can handle population expansion. Second, there are unsolved concerns pertaining to water spots and grazing land (ranching vs grazing reserves) that are essential to the financial existence of agricultural communities and herders. Thirdly, the land tenure system in Nigeria has had a significant impact on how the lower class and peasants acquire land (Nwozor, Olarenwaju, Oshewolo, Oladoyin, Adedire & Okidu, 2020).

Since land is fundamental to both farmers' and herdsmen's socioeconomic existence, disputes over land are common. The notion of indigeneship in Nigeria is another important land-related concern (Adetula, 2016). Individuals are granted the right to possess land by virtue of their indigenous status. According to Okoli (2008), most Nigerian communities, like the Tiv people in the Benue Valley, view land as holy, loaded with symbolic value, and as having historical and ancestral sway. Because of this, land disputes are typically extremely violent and result in significant loss of life and property. Any attempt to minimize the individuals who share this ancestral ancestry typically led to widespread strife. Similarly, CDD (2021) believes that the 1999 Nigerian Constitution's provisions addressing the indigeneship/settler problem are inadequate. Reviewing the Constitution from an immigrant's perspective, the author made sure that immigrants have the same rights and advantages as native-born people.

In essence, disputes are what lead to Nigeria's ambiguous land tenure system (Lamidi & Olaleye, 2023). This is due to the fact that the process has severely reduced the amount of arable land accessible, leading to conflicts over what is left. In particular, the population growth in Tiv territory has depleted its land borders, decreasing the amount of land held per person (Tukur, 2013). This is especially true when it comes to policies pertaining to land use, the import and export aspects of the economy, the rights of natives and immigrants to access resources, indigenous ship, and state security—all of which either encourage or discourage conflicts based on the relative merits of their inappropriateness and appropriateness.

According to Blench (2010), political power imbalances that concentrate power in one group (traditional or contemporary) at the cost of another, ready to blow up at the least provocation, are the underlying cause of conflict. Political ecology is frequently shown by the inadequacies of land access policies. Officials in Sub-Saharan Africa are conflicted over land ownership (Abbass, 2012). Governments, for their part, enact laws granting ownership of land and the authority to distribute it among different levels of government, all the while respecting the indigenous peoples' right to own and control their land. The use of a political ecology viewpoint would facilitate the examination of the ecological foundations of the socio-existential processes that have underpinned the herder-farmer conflict within the study region. Therefore, political ecology provides a useful framework for analyzing environmental rhetoric and narratives, including the conflicts between Nigerian farmers and herders and environmental security. According to Aliyu (2015), one drawback of the human ecological approach of farmer-herder disputes is that it fails to adequately address the politics of land usage.

The History of Herdsmen and Farmers Conflicts and its Causes in Nigeria

In the West Africa Subregion, farmers and herders have coexisted harmoniously throughout history (Davidheiser, 2009). This is in spite of the current crisis they are going through. The two had enjoyed a peaceful, pleasant, and harmonising connection. It has been complimentary in that farmers' greenery has provided the herders with staple food and animals over the years. Conversely, farmers themselves rely on cattle's meat and dairy products, as well as the manure of the herders, to run their farms. Their distribution of land, water, fodder, and other resources has been characterized by an equally beneficial link (Shettima & Tar 2008).

According to Ofuoku (2009), there were no specific instances of violence or deaths between farmers and herders throughout the 12th and 13th centuries, despite the fact that there was robust rivalry between them. Both farmers and herders shared a stake in each other's well-being, fostering a mutually beneficial partnership

(Davidheiser, 2009). Before the arrival of the British colonial authorities, the Fulani elites established a communal structure known as RUGA to safeguard and direct the peace between farmers and herders (Lamidi, 2021). The RUGA was created to plan out grazing grounds and nomadic routes in addition to supervising grazing operations. This RUGA officer is in charge of mediating disputes between crop growers and herders (Sundberg, 2014). The concepts of collaboration between herders and farmers in Northern Nigeria were undermined by the colonial era's alteration and modification of the social and physical structures that already existed.

The cooperative collaboration between farmers and herders was impacted by the shift in the current thinking. As a result, the informal, conventional land tenure system and resource use protocol were undermined. For instance, the colonial rulers imposed a novel dispute resolution method that was strange to the indigenous people and sadly ineffective (Odoh & Chigozie, 2012). From a tactical standpoint, the colonial authorities issued decrees pertaining to property ownership, transferring a significant percentage of the land to their European allies via the privatization process (Okoro, 2018). By reducing the influence and access to land of the local populace and herders, this privatization regime contributed to the scarcity of resources and the worsening of ecological degradation.

Medical care institutions for cattle were also built during the colonial era. These cattle treatment facilities lessened the impact of animal diseases, which in turn encouraged herders to migrate to the southern region of Nigeria (Blench, 2010). Due to the breakdown of the Ruga system, population growth, and the demands of human progress, the disputes between farmers and herders became worse. Climate change is one of the natural forces that also contributes. For example, as mentioned by Alhassan (2013) and Davidheister (2009), changes in the land tenure structure and regional agricultural production practices have been connected to the significant decline in normal rainfall that has occurred in Africa's dry and semi-arid zone since the 1970s.

There is a lot of violent confrontation between farmers and herders surrounding the existing arrangement. One notable early instance of conflict that was documented by Ikelegbe (1998) occurred in Muri, Taraba State, in the early 1990s. The locals there were upset over the distribution of land for large-scale ranches in their neighborhood. There were reports of violent confrontations between farmers and herders in several sections of the nation in 1989 (Adebayo & Olaniyi, 2008). According to Abdullahi (2019), there were allegations that the conflict had an ethnic and religious undertone, which was allegedly influenced by the ethno-religious struggles that preceded the colonial period. However, the lack of such widespread conflicts throughout Nigeria's pre-independence history suggests that more modern issues are at fault. There should be national alarm about the herdsmen's relentless attacks and killings. According to (Baderinwa, 2019), conflicts between herders and farmers claimed the lives of an estimated 121 individuals in the states of Bauchi and Gombe between 1996 and 2006.

Around 1,700 individuals were reportedly killed by herders between January and September of 2018, according to CDD (2021). For example, between 2010 and 2015, there were 850 conflicts in Benue and other north central states that resulted in the relocation of 62,000 persons. Since 2011, there have been several conflicts between herders and farmers that have resulted in at least 10,000 reported deaths. Numerous individuals have experienced homelessness (Popoola, Braimah & Olawale, 2020). Nigeria's ongoing conflicts between farmers and herders have threatened national security and created political instability. There are claims that the Nigerian federal government lacks the political will to face and reverse the deteriorating circumstances facing the country (Lamidi, 2022). The nation's progress and economic growth have been halted by the deteriorating circumstances. The nation's law and order may completely collapse if this deplorable tendency carries on. Herders have typically been accused of ruining farmlands with their herds and nothing being done to hold them accountable or make them pay for their misdeeds (Doyin, 2017; Goke, 2018; Gursay, 2019). Particularly in southwest Nigerian towns, the rise in kidnappings and killings has sparked allegations and denials among farmers and herders.

Consequences of Farmers and Headers Conflicts in Nigeria

Farmers' and Fulani herders' disputes have far-reaching effects. Losses of life and property are the first obvious consequences of such an eruption. Conflicts nearly always show how unprepared and ineffective Nigeria's law enforcement forces are when it comes to dealing with herders' violent deaths (Muhammad, Ismaila & Bibi, 2015). There are several reports of ranchers murdering people and nearly destroying entire communities across the nation. It is getting more and more disturbing that armed robbers who are thought to be Fulani herders are going on fatal missions. They have virtually everywhere in the nation left their bloody mark. Unfortunately, this has been hit by their apparently relentless march. Presumably, they are looking for pastures where their cattle may graze. They have been extremely inconsiderate to the host community in their most recent excursion (Gasu, 2020).

The extent of the devastation caused by the hostilities is one of its evident aftereffects (Inyang, Effiong & Ekwutosi, 2021). There have been many fatalities as a result of these unresolvable conflicts between the herders and their hosts, the farmers. According to Elfversson (2019), a considerable number of farmers and herders have perished along with their herds, while others have seen a decline in herd output. This was corroborated by Ezenwoko & Osagie (2014), who noted that in Imo State, for example, confrontations between farmers and herders and the violence that frequently followed them resulted in 19 fatalities and 42 injuries between 1996 and

2005. Peace and the stability of the country are threatened by the conflicts (Emmanuel & Ndimbwa, 2019). It also affects the coexistence of many tribes in Nigeria, a country with many ethnic groups. The wanton devastation of lives and property during the recent invasion of the Uzo Uwani people in Enugu state, Southeast Nigeria, by these herdsmen is a memory that will never fade (Okoro, 2018). In the past, more damaging events have occurred in the Plateau state's Dogo Nahawa and the Agatu town in Benue state, both in Nigeria's north central geopolitical zone. These are incidents where these bloodthirsty herders are said to have killed hundreds of people, including women, children, and the elderly (Nwakanna & Boroh, 2019). The homes in these villages were set on fire. Additionally, homes were either openly robbed or demolished, and churches were damaged.

It is crucial to remember that the lives and livelihoods of those involved in these conflicts are directly impacted. Additionally, they interfere with and jeopardize the viability of agriculture and pastoral production (Okoli, 2008; Blench, 2010). These disputes undermine social status and food security while perpetuating vicious cycles of severe poverty and famine. Children and women are among the most disadvantaged populations that are primarily impacted by this. Children's education is impacted, which causes developmental barriers and widespread migration (Oppong, 2015; Kwagha, 2018). As a result, this weakens the previously strong bonds between farmers and pastoralists. This terrible circumstance gets worse, particularly if the pastoralist or farmer is assigned to a group based on their location, tribe, or religion. Abbass (2012) cautioned that the discord between sedentarism and pastoralism is a reflection of increased sedentarization. There has been ongoing conflict with the agricultural communities as a result of the rise of pastoralism. In a similar trend, Okoli (2014) noted that there is no way to overstate how detrimental fighting is to Nigeria's national security. The effects of war on the economy, society, and humanitarian fronts have been varied and instructive. The ensuing crises in livelihood and security pose a challenge to the impacted communities' ability to survive and subsist collectively.

Other externalities include the decrease in household capital and the productivity of agriculture which do not bode well for the viability of society and the country. The degree of insecurity has not simply increased due to the wars. However, they have also shown a strong potential to make Nigeria's food situation worse. The loss of people, animals, harvests, and other goods affects other nations (Sundberg, 2014). In a similar vein, Oghuvbu & Oghuvbu (2020) noted the grave consequences of confrontations between farmers and herders. The consequences include damage of a house or farm, harm to oneself or a family member, loss of money, resources, or production, and emotional weariness. Brottem (2019) claims that the socio-economic and political tensions brought about by several violent conflict escalations. These have brought up important national issues about the Nigerian State's continued existence. The state's inability to effectively handle and settle these disputes has cast doubt on the federal structure's applicability or relevance to Nigerian reality. Moreover, Aniche and Ngwu (2019) contended that two more consequences of the dispute between Nigerian farmers and herders are erosion (land degradation) and fatalities.

According to Popoola, Braimah, and Olawale (2020), soil erosion is a result of exposure. The rain makes this situation more worse. The topography of some of the hilly places also contributes to this acceleration. Erosion results in significant soil nutrient loss and makes agriculture challenging. The writers also emphasized the large number of nomad killings and the host groups' retaliatory killings of nomads. It frequently happens when there are disputes. The nomads also slaughter their herds of cattle. Furthermore, a few of the victims—both young and old—have severe wounds or deformities. As a result, some female farmers are now considered widows. Due to all of these, the area's agricultural labor force has severely decreased. There have been documented instances of small weapons and ammunition proliferation throughout this procedure. Given that the headsmen and the host farming groups saw each other as archenemies, this seems conceivable. The spirit of peaceful coexistence and the merger of Nigerian tribes and ethnic groupings is opposed by this ethno-religious conflict.

Mechanisms of Resolving Herders and Farmers Conflict

Nigeria uses a variety of methods and techniques to promote peace. Initiatives for rapprochement and conflict settlement are among them. These entail arbitrating disagreements between parties in conflict. They also aim to facilitate communication in order to advance collaboration and understanding. In addition to more official procedures like truth and reconciliation commissions, this can also involve traditional or religious leaders resolving conflicts (Adetula, 2016). Community-based initiatives are another strategy employed in farmer-herder conflict resolution. These activities, which might include cooperative community projects, workshops on conflict resolution, and peacekeeping training for locals, are aimed at fostering trust and collaboration across communities (Abdulbaqi & Ariemu, 2017). Another strategy for promoting peace in Nigeria is through government-led initiatives. Peacebuilding is a major responsibility of the government. Its legal and judicial processes, as well as its security forces, are all part of the job. Additionally, it can spearhead or assist with projects like job creation and educational efforts that work to advance peace and reconciliation (Gursoy, 2019).

Several academics have proposed several approaches to dispute resolution. There have been difficulties with managing farmers' disputes and headers, nevertheless (Baderinwa, 2019). This explains the recurrence of disputes between farmers and herders across the nation, particularly in recent years. According to Gasu (2020), the conventional approach to dispute resolution that existed in Africa before to colonization was superior than the tactics used now. As stated by Brottem (2019), the goal was to eliminate the source of the conflict and bring the two sides together in a way that would bring society's social structure back to balance. A group of elders from different clans would often conduct a "village square" where disputes would be settled. They reach a peaceful resolution and bring the parties together (Nwakanna & Boroh, 2019). It is best to handle conflicts while they are still simmering. This supports the well-worn adage that prevention is preferable to treatment. This is in line with Mwamfupe's (2015) recommendation to end the war as soon as possible. This suggests the capacity to recognize conflict situations when they are still in their infancy, to comprehend their nature, causes, and potential warning signs before they explode into open violence, and to respond swiftly and forcefully to stop such situations before they escalate. Three crucial aspects of conflict management were identified by Abugu & Onuba (2015): conflict analysis, confrontation and containment, and conflict resolution.

Numerous recommendations were made by Oghuvbu & Oghuvbu (2020) to help reduce confrontations between farmers and headers. They said that initiatives aimed at improving the lives of Fulani herders should be implemented by the government. To achieve this, they need make sure that their rights to utilize land are protected in order to lessen instability and the number of disputes. Among other benefits, this will result in the host communities and Fulani herdsmen living in harmony. Additionally, this increases the cattle's security by allowing them to access resources or grazing areas without damaging farmers' crops. Additionally, Oghuvbu and Oghuvbu (2020) recommended that the grazing reserve law be modified and changed. It is important to remember that the Nigerian Grazing Reserve Act of 1964 was created to give pastoralists access to grazing pastures. Thus, it promotes sedentarization and approaches dispute resolution with an eye on enhancing social amenities and productivity (Vanderlin, 2005; Okoli, 2008; Alhassan, 2013). In a larger sense, this was anticipated to address disease control and the limitations facing the cattle market. But despite the fact that this law was enacted, not much of it was put into practice. There is a decreased output of cattle and an ongoing dispute between farmers and pastoralists. Due of this, over 23% of Nigeria's cattle must be imported from the Sahel region's bordering nations. To address this, the government once more passed the 1988 National Agricultural Policy (CDD, 2021).

The law requires grazing reserves to occupy at least 10% of the country's total area, or 9.8 million acres. But out of 313 reserves, just 2.82 percent were obtained (Abbass, 2014). The current administration is recommending the creation of grazing reserves in light of this. The goal of this is to lessen the ongoing disputes that occur nationwide between headers and farmers. Lamidi (2022) said that a purposeful plan to educate and enlist the parties to the dispute to comprehend the ecosystem and local resources is necessary for a lasting peace to prevail. This creates an opportunity for organizations to work together and complement each other in order to make the best use of the resources available for everyone's benefit and fair access. It is important to enforce herdsmen to follow the marked pathways. Additionally, local, state, and federal governments ought to force farmers to refrain from cultivating across the routes. It is imperative to underscore that the results of many panels and commissions of inquiry tasked with examining the local and global origins of farmer and header disputes must be embraced. To prevent a similar invasion in the future, the measures should be put into practice as needed (Okoro, 2018; Lamidi & Olaleye, 2023). The methods used by law enforcement organizations to get intelligence must be improved. This is in an effort to react quickly in the event that there is a breakdown in law and order brought on by tensions between farmers and headers. It is important to make efforts to halt the spread of weapons, which are frequently used to murder people when conflicts break out.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The main topic of the study is the frequent disputes that arise in Nigeria between farmers and herders. These disputes were less common in the past and were settled using conventional techniques for fostering peace. However, they have now reached a riskier level, resulting in violence and the disturbance of the peace. These disputes are caused by a number of variables, such as concerns about resources, land, population expansion, climate change, and other difficulties (Okoli, 2008; Abbass, 2014; Mwamfupe, 2015; Oghuvbu & Oghuvbu, 2020). Peace and social harmony have been severely disrupted in Nigeria as a result of the escalating disputes between farmers and herders. The symbiotic connection between these species has historically been stressed by a number of causes, including changes in land use patterns, competition for resources, population development, and climate change. Communities have been uprooted, there has been bloodshed, and property has been destroyed as a result of the disputes. The various elements that contribute to the escalation of the conflicts highlight their complexity. Divergent accounts, concerning issues such as resource scarcity, population expansion, or climate change, present

different perspectives but fall short of offering a complete resolution. The use of aggressive methods, the spread of firearms, and the lack of trust between the parties have all made the situation worse.

The massive loss of life and property resulting from conflicts between farmers and herders has a detrimental effect on both pastoral and crop productivity. Hunger and severe poverty are the effects of this. It significantly affects Nigeria's national security as well. Its effects are societal, economic, and humanitarian in many ways. The country's peace and stability are threatened by them (Abdullahi, 2019; Nwakanna & Boroh, 2019). The government must thus devise measures intended to strengthen the Fulani herders in order to end the violence. To reduce instability, they accomplish this by making sure they get rights to use the property. The host communities and the Fulani herders will be able to live in harmony as a result. Prioritizing revegetation and reforestation is imperative for the government, as is addressing the impact of climate change on conflict. Adopting a comprehensive and multifaceted strategy that takes into account both structural and processual aspects is essential. A diverse and cooperative strategy to resolving conflicts between farmers and herders can help to restore peace, encourage sustainable coexistence, and provide doors for the socioeconomic growth of impacted communities. In conclusion, a comprehensive strategy that takes into account the social, economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions of the dispute is necessary for a lasting peace between farmers and herders. Nigeria can create the conditions for a more peaceful future between these important populations by embracing cooperative efforts and tackling the underlying causes of the conflict.

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