

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Causes and Effects of Conflict Between Cattle Herdsmen and Host Community on Food Sustainability in Nigeria

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Abstract

The seasonal southward migration of Fulani herdsmen brings them into contention with indigenous people of the southwestern region for farmland which resulted to conflict. The study was carried out to assess the causes and effects of the conflict between the crop farmers and cattle herdsmen on food sustainability in Nigeria. Specifically, the study identified socio-economic characteristics of respondents, the root causes of the conflicts, its effect on food sustainability and possible solutions to the causes. The study was carried out in some communities in southwestern, Nigeria because of its peculiarity on the conflict that arose between the cattle herdsmen and rural dwellers in the area in 2016. Structured interview schedule was used to elicit information from 148 respondents. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages, means and standard deviation and inferential statistics such as correlation.. The causes of the conflict were destruction of farm by cattle, cattle rustling and killing of the cattle by the crop farmers. The evil effect of the conflict included loss of income, increase in cost of production, poverty, death, physical deformity and psychological trauma. Consequently, the lost of the means of livelihood in the largely agrarian region as crops are destroyed by animals.. In view of this, paper recommends that all stakeholders meeting needs to be organised in order to fashion out a reliable peace initiatives that will bring a permanent solution to the problems. Grazing reserve should be encouraged for the use of pastoral farming and livestock development.

Keywords: Conflict; Herdsmen; Crop farmers; Physical deformity; Psychological trauma

1. Introduction

Agriculture plays a fundamental role in the development of the Nigeria economy and one of its pivotal role is that it is the major employer of labour, employing over 70 percent of the Nigerian population [1];[20]. However, the development of this important sector is being militated by myriads of challenges which include an exchange rate crisis and the attendant runaway inflation confronts the sector and country at large. Furthermore, official corruption adversely affects the workings of government which also had adverse effect on agricultural production.

However, in recent times, insecurity appears to have been the most formidable challenge facing the sector. One of the major challenges confronting the sector is conflict resulting from clashes between Fulani herdsmen and crop farmers especially in the south western Nigeria where they deeply involved in nomadism, a practise of taking animals for grazing outside in the natural field. From time immemorial,

Nomadism is serious business in Nigeria because of the presence of a large herd of cattle population, majority of which are in the hands of pastoralists [3]. Hence, serving as a brewing ground for conflicts between pastoralists and farmers have existed since the beginnings of agriculture. The conflicts have demonstrated high potential of exacerbating the insecurities and food crisis particularly in rural communities where most of the conflicts happens, with reverberating consequences nationwide [4].

It is also noted that most of the grazing animals in Nigeria are reared under extensive systems. Extensive system refers to the system where the animals are allowed to roam and look for food [5]. Thus pastoralists and crop farmers are intertwined, sharing land, water, folder and other resources. This is important because the production of livestock are not mutually exclusive because both crops and livestock farmers compete for the available land resources for survival. Secondly, the production of crops and livestock animals are both carried out by small scale

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farmers that are scattered all over the country with no demarcation between grazing route and cropping zones. Thirdly, majority of the livestock farmers practise extensive system of livestock husbandry which demands that the animals are used for grazing in open grassland without being confined in any farmhouse or grazing boundaries.

As a result of the aforementioned, there are several problems bordering on the relationship between farmers who are indigenes of the community and pastoralists who are of Fulani origin. The Fulani are an ethnic group not unique to Nigeria. They can be found in a number of West and Central African countries including Chad, Mali and Senegal, and even in South Sudan in the North-Eastern Africa. In view of this fact, the struggle for available resource in communities brings conflict between crop-farmers and pastoralists [6]. The major causes of these conflicts as observed by [7] is that most Fulani herdsmen wonder into the fields during growing season while their herds eat or trample on the crops due to the herdsmen's lack of attention or the cattle's stray movement, therefore leading to flaring of emotions.

The resultant effect of increase in competition for arable land has often times led to serious manifestation of hostilities and social friction among the two user-groups in many parts of Nigeria. [8] reported that the last one year has witnessed a harvest of killings in an unprecedented manner by these marauding herdsmen. Recalling to memory are cases of killings in Agatu area of Benue State and Ukpabi Nimbo and Uzo-Uwani communities in Enugu State respectively. Places like Taraba, Delta and Edo states are not spared of such attacks too. In Gashaka, Bali and Donga local councils, several people were killed in Taraba State.

Oke Ako community in Ikole Local Government(LGA) of Ekiti State, Nigeria was also not immune from this disturbing malady. Thus, there is a need to find out the effects of conflict between host community and cattle herdsmen on food sustainability in Nigeria. Other objectives include identifying the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, the root causes of the conflicts and possible solutions to the causes.

2. Material and Methods

The study was carried out in Ekiti State, South western Nigeria. Ekiti State was purposely selected

because of its peculiarity on the conflict that arose between the cattle herdsmen and rural dwellers in that area in 2016. Oke Ako and Aba felix communities in Ikole Local Government was purposively selected. One hundred and forty eight respondents were selected from two communities using simple random sampling technique. Data for the study were collected using interview schedule. Mean, standard deviation, frequencies and percentages were the descriptive statistics used. Respondents were asked to indicate the effect of conflicts based on the level of severity such as very severe (3), severe (2) and not severe (1) and their responses were appropriately coded and mean was used. The data were processed using the SPSS package Version 16 (SPSS Inc. Chicago IL, USA) and descriptive statistics such as mean, percentages and frequencies were used to report the data.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Socio- Economic Characteristics

The socio-economic characteristics of the respondents are presented in table 1. Results in the table shows that 48.0% of the respondents in the study area were between the ages of 30 and 60years. The mean age was 41.6 years old. The study also revealed that the majority of the respondents were between the productive ages of 30-60 years which shows that the sampled population is comprised largely of middle age farmers. Results show that 54.7% of the respondents were male while 45.3% of the respondents in the study area were female. The result is a true reflection that both sex (Male and Female) in the community deeply involved in the practice of agriculture. Also the result shows that 60.1% of the respondents were married while the 26.4% are single. This shows how responsible the people of the community are. In the same vein, 61.5% of the respondents were farmers who were involved in food crop production and strive hard to achieve food sustainability in Nigeria as their primary occupation, 8.8% were civil servant, 29.7% are involved in other kinds of professions like trading, driving, palm wine taping etc. Meanwhile, all others who claimed other occupation as their primary source also indicated that they engage in farming as their secondary occupation. There by serving as an additional income for their households. [9] also firmly posited that farming remains a largely inherited occupation in which the transfer of business control and ownership to the next

generation is critical and essential in the development of the business. *According to a respondent,*

“He noted that he believes in the fact that agriculture is the bedrock of Nigeria economy and cannot be neglected and/or interchange with any other occupation.”

Also 45.3% of the rural dwellers had between 10 -20 years’ of farming experience. Mean farming experience was found to be 15 years revealing a long period of involvement which is contributes to their high income, thereby lending credence to the sayings that experience has contributes tremendously to farming output. One of the respondents of Oke- Ako community claimed that

“He was born into farming and choose to continue in his father’s trend since the occupation fetches him reasonable income, this made him derive pleasure in farming he supported this with a Yoruba adage that says ise agbe ni ise ile baba wa” (meaning we are proud to be farmers).

The mean household size was 5 persons. 50.0% of the respondents have 5-9 persons per household and are headed by a male. This implies that households in the study area are fairly large in size. The average annual income of the respondents before the crises was N311, 000 (\$1016.34). The findings shows that 40.0% of the respondents has an income bracket of N301,000- N400,000 per annum, while 22.3% and 22.9% of the respondents have an annual income bracket of N201,000- N300, 000 and above N400,000 respectively before the conflict eruption between the herdsman and dwellers in the affected community. Hence, the average annual income after the crises went down to N79, 000 (\$258.17). About 50.0% of the respondent has an annual income of less than N100, 000 while 39.2% has an income bracket of N101, 000-N200, 000. This implies that there was a drastic reduction in income generation of the farmers due to the break out of conflict. This might be due to the fact that many of the rural dwellers simply abandoned their farmlands for safety reasons.

Move over, findings show that 75.7% of the respondents attended school. This result shows how important education is to the people of the state. However, 62.5% of the respondents affirmed that they had contacts with extension agent occasionally while

37.5 % of the respondents indicated that they rarely had contacts with extension agents. Nevertheless, respondents who had occasional contact with extension agents asserted that they were given fertilizers and seedling, which contributed immensely to their output.

3.2 Root causes of conflict

The root causes of the conflict were destruction of farms, harvesting of the farm produce by herdsman to feed their cattle and destruction of huts by the herdsman, leading to some people in the community killing their cattle in return as a means of payback on their path. Careful analysis of the conflicts indicates that allegations of cattle rustling by some people in the community. People affected were everyone in the community (farmers, traders, drivers, teachers and so on).

3.3 Effects of the conflict

The Table 3 showed severity of the effect of conflict on the people’s life and community as a whole in descending order with a grand mean of 1.8. Reduction in income available to farmers (M=2.8) came first followed death (M=2.7). Others include physical deformity (M=2.6) and psychological trauma for people in the community which has a devastating effect on their livelihood, increase in production and migration by people of the community to other communities. One of the key informant interviewed disclosed that many people were killed in four villages across community in the state as a result of the crisis. This finding upheld the reports from[10] affirming a griming statistics of the killings and destruction carried by Fulani herdsman in other part of the country such as Kafanchan in Northern region of Nigeria totalling 808 death, 57 people injured while farm produce estimated at about N5.5 billion destroyed. The findings disclosed further that a total of 1,422 houses and 16 churches were burnt during the attacks. The affected communities are spread across Kaura, Sanga, Jama’a and Kauru Local Government area where there had been persistent attacks on communities by gunmen believed to be Fulani herdsman. The Global Terrorism Index ranked the Fulani herdsman the fourth deadliest terrorist group in the world in 2014. Only the fearsome trio of Boko Haram, ISIS and Al-Shabab were adjudged deadlier than them [11].

3.4: *Safety measure used to avoid the reoccurrence of the incident*

Results in the Table show that majority 62.5% of the respondents agreed with statement of opinion that laws should be enacted which will stipulate time of grazing. Furthermore, majority (78.2%) avowed that

government should deploy vigilant and efficient security personnel that will assist in checkmating the activities of herdsmen in the community who were in the habit of destroying the life and properties while also empowering the local vigilantes within those communities to function effectively in order to avoid the reoccurrence of the ugly incidence.

Table 1. Socio economic characteristics of the respondents (n = 148)

Socio economic characteristics	Frequency	Percentages (%)	Mean(STD)
Age			
<30	33	22.3	41.6years(14.7)
30-60	71	48.0	
>60	44	29.7	
Sex			
Male	81	54.7	
Female	67	45.3	
Marital status			
Single	39	26.4	
Married	89	60.1	
Others	20	13.5	
Occupation			
Farming	91	61.5	
Civil service	13	8.8	
Artisan	18	12.2	
Trading	26	17.6	
Farming Experience			
<10 years	48	32.4	15years(3.6)
10-20 years	67	45.3	
21-30 years	26	17.6	
>30 years	7	4.7	
Household size			
<5	26	17.6	(5 persons)
5-9	74	50.0	
10 and above	48	32.4	
Income before crises			
100,000-200,000	22	14.9	(N301,000) (\$983.67)
201,000-300,000	33	22.3	
301,000-400,000	59	39.9	
>400,000	34	22.9	
Income after the crises			
<100,000	74	50.0	(N79,000)
101,000-200,000	58	39.2	
>200,000	16	10.8	
Years of schooling			
Never	36	24.3	(\$258.17) 7 years
1- 6 years	70	47.3	
7-12 years	30	20.3	
13 years and above	12	8.1	

Source: Field survey 2016.

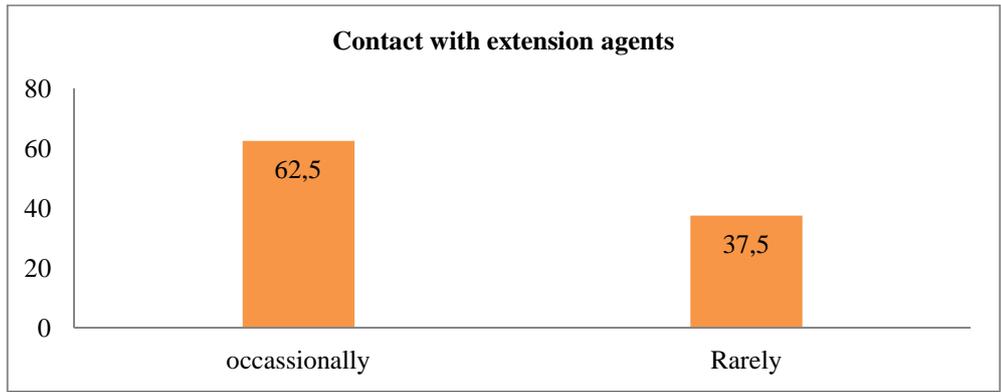


Figure 1. Bar chart showing the relationship of communities who occasionally or rarely are in contact with extension Agents.

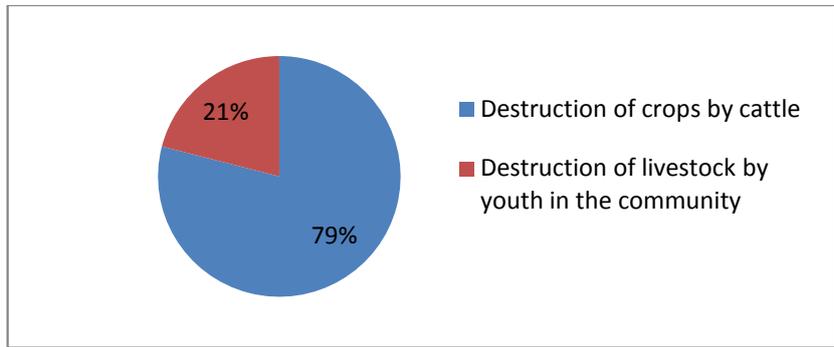


Figure 2. Pie chart showing the root causes of the conflict

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to effects of conflicts on affected community

Effects of conflict	Mean	Rank
Loss of income	2.8	1 st
Death	2.7	2 nd
Physical deformity	2.7	2 nd
Loss of properties	2.6	4 th
Increase in cost of production	2.5	5 th
Sickness	2.5	5 th
Psychological trauma	2.3	7 th
Emotional stress	2.2	8 th

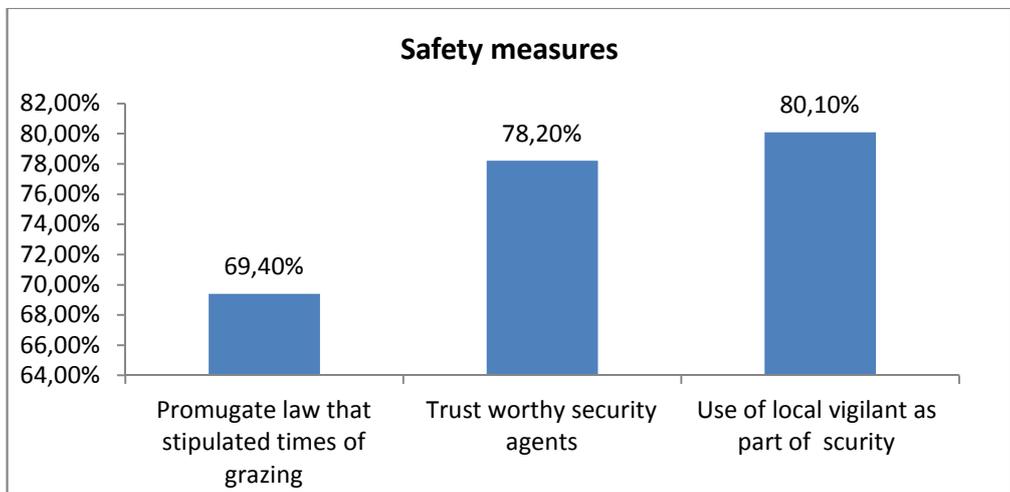


Figure 2. Bar chart showing safety measures

4. Conclusions

Sequel to the outcome of the analyzed and interpreted data, the following conclusions and recommendations were made. The root causes of the conflict includes the destruction of farms, harvesting of farm produce by herdsman for their cattle, destruction of hut occupied by indigenes by the herdsman and also cattle rustling by some people in the community. The evil effects of the conflict on the people of the community and food sustainability includes loss of income, increase in cost of production, poverty, death, physical deformity and psychological trauma.

In view of this, the paper recommends that all stakeholders meeting needs to be organized to fashion out a reliable peace talk that will bring a permanent solution to the problems. There also a need to organize training on conflict resolution which is to be anchored by well-trained extension agents. Anti-Grazing Law which prohibits grazing outside designated places and times, as well as with firearms enacted by the state government is be a welcome idea but need to be enforced and followed to the later. The National grazing reserve (Establishment bill before the National Assembly should as a matter of urgency be passed to law. The bill seeks to establish a grazing reserve in every state of the federation so as not only to improve the livestock production, but also prevent herdsman-farmer conflicts. Nigeria government should wake up to their responsibility of prosecuting any perpetrator of violence within the Nigerian state.

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