



DETERMINANT FACTORS OF RESOURCE CONFLICT BETWEEN FARMERS AND HERDSMEN IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The determinant factors of resource conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Benue State were analysed. Objectives were to assess the prevalence of resource conflict factors in Benue state and determine factors most responsible for the resource conflict in Benue state. Field survey of three hundred and eighty-two (382) residents was conducted using questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion. Data collected were analyzed using percentage and Factor Analysis. Results showed that factors such as drought, flood, erosion, pollution, politics, greed, proliferation of arms, religion, tribalism, expansion of farmland, increases in herds, poverty, unemployment, cattle rustling, destruction of crops by herds, population growth and urbanization are responsible for the conflict. However, further, analysis of result shows that only 1.38% of respondents posited that environmental/climatic factors, 30% economic factors, 32.78% greed/insecurity, 13.75% and 22.08% posited cultural and population factors respectively. It was concluded that human factors such as economic, greed/insecurity, cultural and population are the major drivers of the resource conflict between farmers and herdsmen than environmental factors like erosion, flood and draught. promote skill acquisition and create jobs to engage youths to boost the economy and reduce conflict.

KEYWORDS: Herdsmen, Farmers, Resource, Conflict, Benue State

1. INTRODUCTION

Resource conflict largely attributed to change in climate pattern, land use, population growth and ethno-religious difference is among the contemporary global challenges. Resource conflicts are disagreements and disputes over access to, control and use of natural resources (FAO, 2000).

These conflicts often emerge because people have different uses for resources such as minerals, forests, water, pastures and land which they want to manage them in different ways. In various parts of Nigeria, farmers and herdsmen conflict has been ongoing over the years. Available data suggest that conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria over resource use is as old as agriculture itself but has taking a

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new and suspicious dimension since 2013 (Okoro, 2018). It has been regarded as banditry and insurgency. For instance, Senator Clifford Ordia, representing Edo Central, on plight entitled, "the need to curtail the activities of herdsmen" lamented that herdsmen attacks is another Boko Haram (Mikailu, 2016). The Global Terrorism Index (2016) reported that in 2016, more than 1,200 people lost their lives to herder's attacks. This made the Fulani herdsmen the world's fourth deadliest group (GTI, 2016; Mikailu, 2016).

The case of Benue state in recent time is completely destruction and suspicious in nature with many devastating effects such as loss of lives, displacement, loss of properties including houses. In short some media prefer to address it as "Benue killing" or "Herdsmen killing or attack". In the same vain, Adamu & Ben (2017) titled their work "Nigeria: Benue State under the shadow of "herdsmen terrorism" (2014 – 2016)". This is far from the usual mild and non violent conflicts such as avoidance, ridicule and verbal exchanges, insults and character assassination between the two parties (Agbegbedia, 2013). The current 'conflict' had raised fear and people are suspicious of agenda behind the escalation and mode of conflict.

Thus, scholars have studied and theorized on resource conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria to offer explanations on the origin and persistence of the conflict (Shettima & Tar 2008; Akov, 2017; Adeoye, 2017; Ibekwe et al., 2018). Notable theory used in the explanation of resource conflict between farmers and herders includes the Relative Deprivation and Eco-conflict theories. Literatures abound on the causes of resource conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria. Few examples are as follows:

Ajibefun (2018) observed that the main causes of the herdsmen-farmers conflict in Nigeria included, destruction of crops, harassment of nomads by host youths, disregard for traditional authority, stray cattle, sexual harassment of women by nomads and indiscriminate bush burning and theft of cattle. Blench (2004) believed the conflict is as a result of illegal invasion of farms and destruction of crops by cattle, particularly during the planting season and immediately after the harvesting period. Ingawa et al. (1999) submitted that the main cause included changing resource access rights, inadequacy of grazing resources, and decline in internal discipline and social cohesion.

Abubakar (2012) submitted that lack of sensitization of people on the application of the land use Act of 1978 has been the major cause of the conflict. On the other hand, Mikailu (2016) opined that the relationship between farmers and nomadic Fulani's started degenerating when the Hausa farmers began to raise animals, including cattle. In a related development, Adamu (2007) also observed that colonial policies in some states has led to the seizure of vast tracts and farming lands and turned it into native authority forest reserve and this has been a source of conflict between herdsmen and farmers. Furthermore, Yahaya (2008) pointed that negligence on the part of both herdsmen and farmers was also a cause of the conflicts. The predominant causes of conflict between the crop farmers and pastoralist, according to Adebayo and Olaniyi (2008) are damaging of crops and blockage of water points.

The fundamental factors such as climate change and desertification necessitated the movement of herders down South, and across Middle-Belt zones of Nigeria in search of pasture for their herds (Iro, 1994; Abass, 2012). Moreover, the population of both migrating cattle herders have been on a progressive increase, with a 51.9% increase in the past six (6) decade (Worldometers, 2019). Population increase significantly increases the demand for land and other resources, unfortunately, land area does not expand. Consequently, pressure on land and its resource increases couple with inappropriate measures by government and populace to properly utilize land and other resources through modern farming and animal husbandry have resulted to the resource conflict (Abass, 2012; Akevi, 2014; Durojaiye, 2014).

Literature also recognizes the centrality of resource scarcity and competition between different occupational and ethno-cultural groups (Homer-Dixon, 1999; Ide, 2015; Froese & Schilling, 2019). Alterations in land use pattern and access among the different occupational groups have earlier been pointed as the cause of the resource conflict (Bavinck et al., 2014). According to Azare et al, (2020) the issues involved in the resource conflict are beyond the processes of internal differentiation within the peasantry as a result of agricultural commodity production. It is now very well politicized, in this vain, Shehu (2018) lamented that the most disheartening thing in this conflict is how some well-placed individuals and politicians seems to label the conflict giving it a religious and ethnic coronation.

Study has also linked the conflict with divisive state and local government policies that discriminate on ethnic and religious grounds (Agbegbedia, 2013). It is on this context that Shetima & Tar (2008) suggested that political powerlessness has been a recurring issue 'where rules governing the trespass of animals are made and enforced by farmers with an inherent bias against pastoralists and animal keepers'. Ibekwe et al., (2018) on their opinion assert that 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 in Nigeria. Similarly, Braukämper, (2000) reported that "ethical, political, economic, cultural, and religious tensions profoundly impact the relationship between Fulani herders and farmers in Nigeria". Adisa, (2012) noted that environmental factors and the scarcity of resources also lead to the conflict between the two groups.

Some significant recorded factors of farmers and herdsmen resource conflict are drought, flood, erosion, pollution, politics, greed, proliferation of arms, religion, tribalism, expansion of farmland, increases in herds, poverty, unemployment, cattle rustling, destruction of crops by herds, population growth and urbanization.

However, despite this elaborate and diverse factor recognized to be responsible for resource conflict between farmers and herders, studies have applied mainly qualitative approach, thus, this

study added to existing knowledge through application of both qualitative and quantitative methods to determine which of the factors plays major role in the escalation of resource conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Benue state. Thus, answers were provided for the following research questions: what resource conflict factors are prevalent in Benue state? Which factor is most responsible for the resource conflict between farmers and herders in Benue state? The following objectives were achieved: the prevalence of resource conflict factors in Benue state was assessed and factors most responsible for the resource conflict in Benue state was determined.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Study Area

Benue state is located between Latitude 6° 25' and 8° 8' North and Longitudes 7° 47' and 10° 0' East. It is bounded to the North by Nasarawa state, to the West by Kogi State, to the East by Taraba state and the Cameroun Republic, and to the South by Cross-River and Enugu states (Figure1). Benue is well drained as it hosts River Benue, one of the biggest rivers in Nigeria. Thus, there is abundant water resource for both crop farming and animal husbandry. The availability of water and plain land makes the area good for farmers and herders' activities.

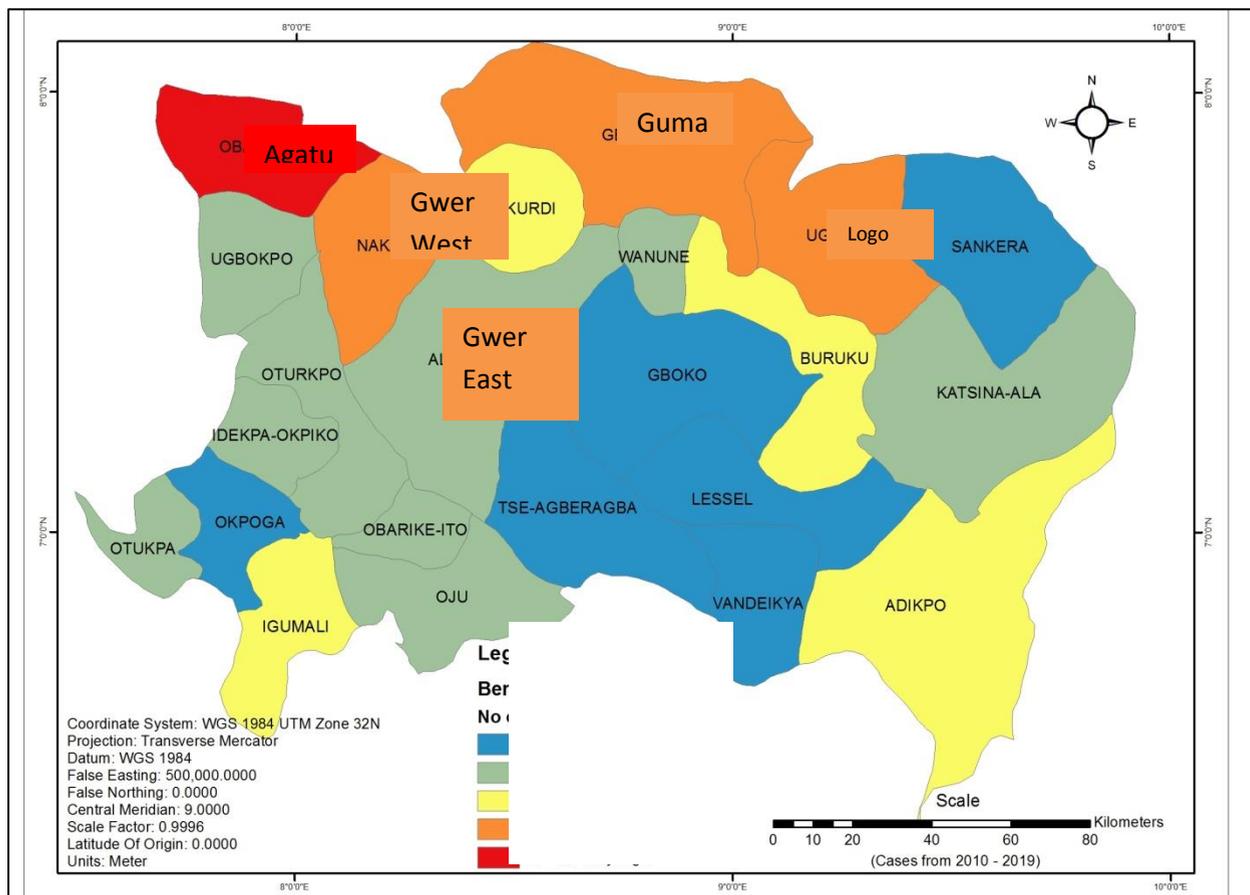


Figure 1: the Study Area
Source: Odele et al. (2020)

METHODS

Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources, but were mainly from primary sources. Data were mixed (quantitative and qualitative) due to the nature of the study. Field survey of three hundred and eighty-two (382) people was conducted using questionnaire (Appendix A), interview and focus group discussion. The sample frame included major stakeholders which like registered Benue State Arable Farmers, members of Herdsmen Association Benue Chapter, key personalities at the state, Local Government and community levels which include traditional rulers, security agencies staff, state emergency management staff and clergymen. The sample frame was estimated at ninety thousand nine hundred and seventeen (90917) from which the sample size of 382 was drawn based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) method of determining sample size from a given population.

Simple random sampling technique was used for sample selection. As a starting-point for sample selection, the study made use of the list of each Local Government Area arable farmers as provided by Benue State Agricultural Development Programm (BSADP, 2018). A sample was drawn randomly from a population list of each Local Government Arable Farmers who are on Benue state Agricultural Development Programm (BSADP, 2018) data base. On the side of herdsmen, list of herdsmen association in the study area was used to draw random sample of herdsmen administered questionnaire to during their association meeting. Key personalities were also visited in their homes/offices for questionnaire administration and interview. The sample size for each stakeholder group was determined proportionally to their number (Table1). Data collected were analyzed using mean, percentage and Factor Analysis.

Table 1: Sample Size for Each Group of Stakeholders

Stakeholders	Estimated Population	Sample Size
Farmers	67,751	206
Herdsmen	11,845	90
Key Personality(traditional rulers, clergy men security and emergency management agencies)	11,321	86
Total	90917	382

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**Prevalence of Resource Conflict Factors in Benue State**

Respondents were asked to outline the causal factor of resource conflict between farmers and herdsmen. Table 2 present the frequency of casual factors of Benue resource conflict outlined by respondents. Factor analysis was employed to group and analyze the identified factors into more manageable size. These factors such as drought,

flood, erosion, pollution, politics, greed, proliferation of arms, religion, tribalism, expansion of farmland, increases in herds, poverty, unemployment, cattle rustling, destruction of crops by herds population growth and urbanization were resolved into five main factors: Environmental/climatic, economic, socio-cultural, greed/ insecurity, and population factors (Table 3)

Table 1 Casual Factor of Resource Conflict in Benue State

Casual Factor of Resource Conflict in Benue State	Frequency
Drought	36
Flood	13
Erosion	12
Pollution	2
Expansion of farmland	380
Increase in herds	318
Poverty	322
Unemployment	346
Cattle rustling	382
Destruction of crops by herds	382
Proliferation of arms	382
Land grab	346
Religion	208
Tribalism	208
Hostility	210
Heterogeneous population	245
Migration	382
Urbanization	378
Total	4552

Table 3 shows that only 1.38% of respondents posited that environmental/climatic factors (drought, erosion, flood and drought) are responsible for resource conflict in Benue state. Thirty percent (30%) attributed it to economic factors (expansion of farmland, increase in herds, poverty and unemployment), largest percent 32.78% attributed it to greed/insecurity (cattle rustling, destruction of crops by herds, proliferation of arms and land grab), 13.75% and 22.08% attributed it to cultural factors (religion, tribalism and hostility) and population factors (natural increase, migration and urbanization) respectively.

Similar results have been reported by previous studies. Adebayo and Olaniyi (2008) reported that the most common causes of conflict between the crop farmers and pastoralist are damaging of crops and blockage of water points. Braukämper (2000) similarly, reported that “ethical, political, economic, cultural, and religious tensions profoundly impact the relationship between Fulani herders and farmers in Nigeria”. Adisa, (2012) posited that environmental factors and the scarcity of resources also lead to the conflict between the two groups.

Table 3: Principle Factor of Resource Conflict in Benue State

Factors	Frequency	Total	%
1. Environmental/climatic			
Drought	36		
Flood	13		
Erosion	12	63	1.38
Pollution	2		
2. Economic			
Expansion of farmland	380		
Increase in herds	318		
Poverty	322	1366	30
Unemployment	346		
3. Greed /Insecurity			
Cattle rustling	382		
Destruction of crops by herds	382		
Proliferation of arms	382	1492	32.78
Land grab	346		
4. Socio-Cultural			
Religion	208		
Tribalism	208	626	13.75
Hostility	210		
5. Population			
Natural increase	245		
Migration	382	1005	22.08
Urbanization	378		
Total	4552	4552	99.99

Environmental/ climatic issues (drought, flood, erosion and pollution) is the least recognized casual factor of armed conflict and majority of respondents sees human factors (economic, greed/insecurity, cultural and population) factors as the major actors. This also supported the position of Adonteng-Kissi (2015) that conflict is not a climatic accident, its dynamics results from actors' actions and understanding of the situation, of their representations of what is at stake (natural resources, honour, wealth, identity, life).

Thus, environmental/climatic factors cannot be justified as the cause of the violent and destructive conflict going on in Benue state. This result is also in accordance with the report of Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) and the Pastoral Resolve (PARE) (2015) that conflict in Nigeria is characterized by widespread suspicion, mutual mistrust and animosity. The report of CDD and PARE in 2015 have associated conflict scenario in Nigeria with ethno primordial manipulations and grand-standing that set one group against the other, leading to a cycle of violence and vendetta.

The interview and focus group discussion section with residents also indicates that relative deprivation theory is significant in explaining casual factors of resource conflict. Each group was asked to explain possible causes of the conflict in Benue State. We had lived in peace with members of herder communities, who are Fulani until recently, especially since 2013. The Fulani herders also said the same thing about living in peace with the farmers. Some farmers said problems started over the destruction of their crops due to the animals of the herders grazing on their farmlands, while some, could not explain the reasons for the attacks.

The opinion of most participants is that human factors surpassed environmental factors in Benue resource conflict. However, it is important to note that environmental stress leads almost directly to social stress; as resources decrease and human populations increase, migration and social fragmentation accelerate. Already there is strong anecdotal evidence for immigration from the Sahel and there is a corresponding increase in opportunistic exploitation of single resources by outsiders (Fanaan, 2014).

Moreover, the farmers and herders uniformly agreed on some influences of environmental factors on resource conflict but differ in human factors such as socioeconomic, socio-cultural political factors of resource conflict. Both farmers and herders attributed frequent conflict to high dependent on land for sustenance and livelihood. Struggles over grazing land fermented troubles that precipitated to violence. Climate change associated with extreme weather events was pointed as a factor driving the conflict. A farmer from Agatu noted that fluctuation in climate pattern is responsible for clashes at the onset of rain. In agreement with this position, another farmer from Guma LGA stated that "Late return of rain causes the herders to overstay in their farmer thereby causing clashes during land preparation". Similarly, many herders attributed conflict to changes in routine activities of both farmers and herders.

On the human aspect, many farmers claimed that herders are always and consequently attack innocent farmers on their way to their farm. Contrarily, an elderly Fulani man differed on this opinion by asserting that 'it was the farmers who usually provoked herders by calling them animals. Since they would not accept such names, the Fulani therefore respond quickly by attacking the farmers, and not that, they were drunk. A herdersmen leader also pointed that bush burning by farmers is also another cause of

pastoralists and farmers' conflict. This practice was widely used by farmers, but the pastoralists did not like this practice. Interviews with both groups revealed that bush burning served several purposes. For the farmers, bush burning facilitates fast clearing of the remains of previous season's crop residues on the field. It also destroys the hideouts of the rodents that damaged farm crops. From the points of the pastoralists, bush burning was an intentional act to prevent animals from eating crop residue.

It was observed that involvement of young ones in herd keeping leads to conflict as children cannot properly control large flock. A herder explained that: it is always difficult for the little herdersmen to control the large herds of animals during grazing. Thus, while they are behind, they would not see what the animals are grazing in the front and while they are in front, it is always impossible for them to know what is going on behind. In addition, the animals are not human beings and as such, cannot differentiate between weeds and crops, therefore, would graze on every grass they come across. However, a traditional ruler in Gwer West faulted this blame to children and lamented that herders are being sponsored to eradicate the ingenious farmers. He pointed that most of the recent killing are unprecedented.

Although, herders blamed the conflicts on marginalization and expansion of farmland to grazing area they disclaimed responsibility for ongoing killings in Benue state. They were of the view that those killing the farmers were not the herders residing in the state but transhumance pastoralist who occasionally passes through the state. Even the leaders of the Fulani in the communities agreed that: The major problems facing them are the irresponsible activities of these young pastoralists, cattle rustling by both strange pastoralist and non-pastoralist.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Factors such as drought, flood, erosion, pollution, politics, greed, proliferation of arms, religion, tribalism, expansion of farmland, increases in herds, poverty, unemployment, cattle rustling, destruction of crops by herds, population growth and urbanization were responsible for the conflict. However, human factors such as economic, greed/insecurity, cultural and population are the major drivers of the resource conflict between farmers and herdersmen than environmental factors like erosion, flood and draught. Thus, the following were recommended:

- i. Government at all levels should promote skill acquisition and create jobs to engage youths to boost the economy and reduce conflict.
- ii. Establishment of traditional laws by the local administration to ensure the proper management and use of land and natural resources.
- iii. Benue State Government should strive for sustainable development which relates to positive socio-economic change that does not undermine the livelihood of the residents.

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Appendix A: Research Questionnaire
TOPIC: DETERMINANT FACTORS OF RESOURCE CONFLICT BETWEEN FARMERS AND HERDSMEN IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA.

Dear respondent,
 This questionnaire is being administered to resident of Benue State especially Farmers, Herder, traditional rulers, clergy men, security and staff of emergency management agencies. It is designed to gather relevant information on the factors of resource conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Benue State, Nigeria. It is purely for academic purpose only and will ensure your confidentiality.

Section I (Instruction: Tick appropriately)
Personal Data

1. kindly tick your profession or service as the case may be (a) farming (b) herding (c) traditional ruler (d) religious leader (e) security personnel (f) SEMA/ NEMA staff (g) others specify).....
2. Years of experience in profession (please tick as appropriate) (a) 0- 5years (b) 5-10 years (c) 10-15 years (d) 15 years above
3. Have Benue state witnessed conflict between farmers and herders in the recent years? (a) Yes (b) No
4. Have you witnessed conflict between farmers and herders in Benue state in the recent years? (a) Yes (b) No
5. Do ever partake in the farmers and herders conflict (a) Yes (b) No
6. If yes in number 5 above, explain your contribution or role
7. What area the causal factors of resource conflict between famers and herdsmen in Benue state?
8. What factor is the major driver of resource conflict between famers and herdsmen in Benue?

- (a) Environmental/climatic factors (drought, erosion, flood and drought)
 - (b) Economic factors (expansion of farmland, increase in herds, poverty and unemployment)
 - (c) Greed/insecurity (cattle rustling, destruction of crops by herds, proliferation of arms and land grab),
 - (d) Cultural factors (religion, tribalism and hostility)
 - (e) Population factors (natural increase, migration and urbanization)
9. Environmental/climatic factors of resource conflict between farmers and herders include (a) Drought (b) Erosion (c) Flood (d) Drought (e) others specify).....
 10. Economic factors of resource conflict between farmers and herders include (a) expansion of farmland (b) increase in herds (c) poverty (d) unemployment
 11. How does greed/insecurity influence resource conflict between farmers and herders?
 12. How does population factor influence resource conflict between farmers and herders?