

## Prevalence of Herdsmen and Farmers Conflict in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *The quest for protection and preservation of secured economic sources of livelihood appears to be the bane for continued conflict between herdsmen and farmers in different places. The paper examined the prevalence of herdsmen and farmers conflict in Nigeria. The study is anchored on the frustration-aggression and conflict theories. Data were extracted from secondary sources like journals, textbooks, newspapers and online organizational publications. Evidences indicated that herdsmen-farmers conflict is prevalent in the country. It also showed that some of the factors that usually led to clashes were destruction or grazing on crops, long-standing disagreements, lack of access to farm or grazing fields and scarcity of fresh water. Consequently, loss of human and animal lives, destruction of crops and properties, displacement of persons and animals, rising anti-Fulani sentiment and breakdown of peaceful relationship with many communities in some parts of the country were amongst the gross effects of the conflict. However, the study concluded that until this issue is amicably resolved and absolute cooperation among the conflicting parties enhanced; food and national security would continue to be threatened. Therefore, the study recommended amongst others that government should establish cattle grazing fields in the six geo-political zones of the country and out-law open grazing of cattle. This must be done through due consultation, dialogue or appeal to some aggrieved regions of the country which may oppose or resist the move. Poor water management practice in the country should be improved by the Federal Ministry of Water Resources. This is in view of the fact that climate change cum water shortage and drought are the major reasons herdsmen are migrating southward in search of fresh water and grass for their cattle.*

**Keywords:** conflict, farmers, herdsmen, nomadic, pastoralists.

### Introduction

The quest for protection and preservation of secured economic sources of livelihood appears to be the bane for continued conflict between herdsmen and farmers in different places. In West Africa, conflicts between farmers and nomadic cattle herders have been a common feature of economic activities for ages (Tonah, 2006). The Northern region of Ghana has recently experienced increased clashes between the two groups over access to land resources (Olaniyan, Francis & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015). The struggle for the use of agricultural land for planting and grazing is becoming fiercer and increasingly widespread in Nigeria, largely due to intensification of production activities that are necessitated by rising human population (Fasona & Omojola, 2005).

Prior to 20<sup>th</sup> century, cattle rearing was prevalent in the Guinea, Sudan and Sahel Savanna belts where crop production was carried out on small scale only during the short rainy season. This gave

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cattle herders access to a vast area of grass land. However, the introduction of irrigated farming in the Savanna belt of Nigeria and the increased withering of pasture during dry season has made pasture less available for cattle. The herdsman had to move southward to the coastal zone, where rainy season is longer and the soil retains moisture for long, in search of greener pasture and fresh water for their cows (Ofuoku & Isife, 2009). As the herders migrate southward where the grass is much lush and often intrude into spaces long claimed or cultivated by settled farmers, conflicts usually ensued (Olaniyan, Francis & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015). This conflict is believed to have existed since the beginning of agriculture and either increased or decreased in intensity or frequency depending on economic, environmental and other factors (Aliyu, 2015).

In many places, herders have clashed with farmers and their host communities over cattle destruction of crops; farmers' encroachment on grazing reserves and indiscriminate bush burning by nomads which normally leads to loss of crops (Adeoye, 2017; Ofem & Inyang, 2014; Olaleye, Odotola, Ojo, Umar & Ndanitsa, 2010). The seeming boldness of the perpetrators and mystery surrounding the real cause has continued to attract mixed perceptions. While many perceive it as mere farming, grazing land and water dispute; others see it as reprisals in defence of livestock from banditry in farming communities (Eyekpimi, 2016; Mikailu, 2016). In recent times, there have been prevalent cases of herders-farmers clashes in Nigeria. Ofuoku and Isife (2009) noted that in Densina, Adamawa State, 28 people were killed; while about 2,500 farmers were displaced and rendered homeless in a clash between them. Similarly, Idowu (2017) submits that the violence has displaced more than 100,000 people in Benue and Enugu States and left them under the care of relatives or in makeshift Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps while many are still struggling to rebuild their lives.

However, among the Tiv and other farmers in the North-Central, South-South, South-East and North-Eastern regions, cases of conflicts with herdsman are endless. The resultant effects are usually loss of lives and crops, destruction of properties, displacement of persons, decline in income/savings; as well as threat to food and national security. Beside, the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) recently placed the Nigeria's Fulani herdsman as the world's fourth deadliest militant group for having accounted for about 1,229 deaths in 2014. While Boko Haram was associated with about 330 casualties in the first quarter of 2016, the Fulani herdsman accounted for nearly 500 deaths and have shown no sign of slowing down. As such, it has been predicted that the Fulani herdsman might well surpass Boko Haram as Nigeria's most dangerous group (Burton, 2016; GTI, 2015). In view of the aforementioned issues, this paper examines the prevalence of herdsman and farmers conflict in Nigeria.

## **Conceptual Clarifications**

### *Historic Background of Herdsman*

Herdsman are owners or keepers of herds of animals like cattle. They usually move their herds from one place to another in search of pasture and fresh water. In Nigeria, it is predominantly the occupation of the Fulani ethnic group. In other words, they own and rear cattle for commercial purposes.

According to Idowu (2017), the Fulani (also called Peul or Fulbe) are people of obscure origin that expanded eastward from Futa Toro in Lower Senegal in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. By 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries they had established themselves at Macina (upstream of the Niger Bend) and Hausa lands, notably, Adamawa (in the northern Cameroon). Many of the Fulanis continued to maintain pastoral lives; some, however, particularly in Hausa land gave up their nomadic pursuits, settled in existing urban communities and were converted to Islām. This has often made it difficult to differentiate them from the Muslim-Hausas of Nigeria (Idowu, 2017). They are concentrated principally in Nigeria, Mali, Guinea, Cameroon, Senegal and Niger. Their indigenous language is known as Fula and it is classified within the Atlantic branch of the Niger-Congo language family. They constitute the fourth-largest ethnic group in Nigeria with an estimated population of over seven million (Burton, 2016).

However, Abass (2012) noted that they are the mainstay of the meat and milk industry, accounting for about 90% of cattle ownership in Nigeria. They rear different species of cattle such as the Keteku, Muturu and Kuri, but the Zebu is identified as the most common and they are also the major suppliers of skins, bones and horns (Adeoye, 2017). Fulani herders can travel hundreds of miles in large numbers with their cattle in search of pasture. They are often armed and visibly move about with weapons (like daggers, machets, arrows etc.) to protect their livestock. Due to their violent nature and associated killings, the group was recently described as the world's fourth deadliest militant group (GTI, 2015; Mikailu, 2016).

#### *Prevalence of Herdsmen-Farmers Conflict in Nigeria*

**Table 1: Herdsmen-Farmers Conflicts in Nigeria between January 2016 and May 2017.**

S/n	Place	Date	Immediate cause(s)	Death toll/Casualties/Degree of Destruction
<b>A. Incidences of 2016</b>				
1.	Udeni Ruwa, Nasarawa state	January 6	Destruction of farm crops	Between 12 and 38 people were killed and many wounded.
2.	Gareji village in Taraba State	January 17		3 people were killed
3.	Demsare, Wunamokoh, Dikajam and Taboungo of Adamawa State	January 23		Between 30 and 60 people including a police DPO were killed and properties destroyed.
4.	Agatu, Benue State	February 2	Reprisal attack	7 people were killed and the community

				was thrown into mourning.
5.	Tom-Anyiin and Tom-Ataan communities, Tombu in Buruku LGA, Benue State	February 7	Clash between Fulani herdsmen and farmers	10 persons were killed and the community was raided.
6.	Abbi, Enugu State	February 11		2 persons were killed and some were declared missing
7.	Agatu, Benue State	February 24 & 28	Reprisal attack against the alledged killing of a prominent Fulani man by the people of Agatu in 2013	Between 300 and 500 persons were killed and wounded. Others were displaced.
8.	Ossissa, Ndokwa, Delta State	March 2		Some people were wounded and residents were forced to flee their homes as houses were destroyed.
9.	Mbaya-Tombo, Benue state	March 7,8 13 & 17	Dispute and distruction of farm crops	Over 35 persons died and properties were destroyed.
10.	Ugwunesi in Awgu LGA, Enugu State	March 26	A reprisal attack by Fulani herdsmen after armed farmers killed a Fulani traditional ruler- Ardo of Kardorko- Alhaji Habibu Domo, and four others	2 Soldiers, 18 others were Killed. Thousands were displaced and more than 1000 homesteads were destroyed.
11.	Ohali-Elu, Rivers State	April 3-7	Clash with communities	About 7 to 16 people were killed.
12.	Ilado, Ondo State	April 9	Hon. Olu Falae, former SGF, was attacked by herdsmen and they killed his security guard	Herdsmen attacked and killed the security guard of Chief. Falae.

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| 13. | Angai, Dashole, Dori and Mesuwa villages of Taraba State | April 10    | Farm land dispute   | Between 15 and 44 people were killed.   |
| 14. | Agatu, Benue State                                       | April 20    | Policemen attacked  | Some persons were injured and a policeman was declared missing.   |
| 15. | Ndiagu Attakwu, Nkanu-West LGA, Enugu State              | April 25    | Herdsman were alleged to have entered the heart of the community that afternoon and a woman sounded a gong, after which the cows scattered: the herdsman gathered the herds and left, only to return in the night and raided the village. | Many were murdered, including a catholic church seminarian and a pregnant woman whose stomach was cut open. Also houses were destroyed, |
| 16. | Nimbo Community of Uzo-Uwani LGA, Enugu state            | April 25    | Herdsman were said to have earlier disagreed with the villagers over the use of farmlands as grazing fields.  | 46 people were killed and 10 houses were burnt, including Christ Holy Church International during the invasion.                         |
| 17. | Dungun Mu'azu, Sabuwa LGA, Katsina State                 | November 25 | Reprisal attack   | 8 people were massacred (7 men and 1 woman)   |

**B.****Incidences of 2017**

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|-----|---|------------|---|---|
| 18. | Abraka and Obiaruku, both in Ethiope East and Ukwuani LGAs, Delta State | January 9  |   | No fewer than 5 persons were killed.  |
| 19. | Zango-Kataf Local Council of Kaduna State                               | January 17 | Herdsman opened fire in Samaru Kataf market | 3 persons were killed and five injured.   |
| 20. | Ipiga village in Ohimini LGA, Benue State                               | January 24 | Grazed cattle and destroyed farmlands       | 15 persons were killed. A bloody fight that took the lives of two of the herdsman and about |

				13 of the villagers.
21.	Jema'a LGA, Kaduna State	January 24	Commercial car taking students to school from Kafanchan was waylaid by alleged herdsmen	5 students of the College of Education, Gidan Waya were shot dead.
22.	Rukumawa Tsafe LGA, Zamfara State	February 10	Clash between community members and suspected herdsmen	8 people were confirmed dead.
23.	Southern Kaduna, Kaduna State	February 21	Fulani herdsmen launched attacks on four communities	About 21 people were killed.
24.	Mbahimin community, Gwer East LGA, Benue State	March 2	Renewed hostilities between herdsmen and farmers in Mbahimin community	No fewer than 10 persons were killed.
25.	Omumu community, Ika South LGA, Delta State.	March 6	Clash between suspected herdsmen and residents of Omumu community	6 persons died.
26.	Tiv community, Mkgovur village in Buruku LGA, Benue State	March 11		7 people were killed.
27.	Umuobasikwu, Ozuitem community in Bende LGA, Abia State	March 14	Clash between herdsmen and the people of Umuobasikwu	1 person was killed and several others injured.
28.	Adam Village, Kwande LGA, Benue State	March 27	Herdsmen farm attack	1 killed, 1 injured, women raped in their farms.
29.	Emuhu community in Ika South LGA, Delta State	March 28	Attack by suspected herdsmen	3 persons were killed while six others sustained injuries.
	Obio Usiere in Eniong Abatim, Odukpani LGA, Cross River State	April 1	Raid a community	killed no fewer than 10 persons

30.	Tse-Akaa village, Mbamar District of Logo, Benue State	Ugondo May 8	Clash with herdsmen	3 persons were killed.
31.	Ossissa community in East LGA, Delta State	May 12	Farmers who worked with Ugo Farm were ambushed on their way home	Suspected herdsmen beheaded a commercial motorcycle rider and six farmers.
32.	Afam Uku, Oyigbo LGA, Rivers State	May 18	Herdsmen attack	2 persons lost their lives.
33.	Ewu community, Esan Central LGA, Edo State	May 22	Herdsmen entered farmland raped two women and strangled them to death	2 people were killed and 1 was wounded. Crops were destroyed and lots of persons sacked from their farmlands.

**Source: Authors compilation from Vanguard (2017, June 1<sup>st</sup>) and Kalu (2017, June, 3<sup>rd</sup>).**

### **Theoretical Orientation**

The study is anchored on frustration-aggression and conflict theories. The theories are suitable, relevant and best explain the phenomenon leading to the prevailing issues of conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria.

#### *Frustration-Aggression Theory*

This theory was originally conceived by Dollard and Miller (1939) but later substantially refined by Berkowitz in 1969. The theory states that aggression is an outcome or result of blocking or frustrating a person's efforts towards a certain goal (Dollard, 1939; as cited in Myers, 2007). The theory further posits that frustration caused by interference in goal-directed activity produces a 'readiness' for aggression which if 'triggered' can result in aggressive response. According to Rationis (2014), the trigger could be an insignificant element of behavior, such as a casual joke, gesture or mild criticism which would normally be overlooked, but to the frustrated individual who is already waiting for an opportunity to show his frustration it may provoke aggressive response or reprisal.

In application to this study, the goal or aim of every farmer during planting season is to have bountiful harvest, then sell the farm produce and make profits. On the other hand, the herdsmen would always want to have well fed and healthy cattle and be able to make profits as well. When any of these expectations was not realizable, either by the herd (cattle) eating up and destroying the farmers' crops or that the farmer encroached on grazing reserves or use water reserved for cattle to irrigate their

farms, aggression would be triggered. Either of the parties that felt frustrated to achieving their economic goals may decide to reprise as to show their displeasure and as a result conflict will occur.

Furthermore, a clear readiness for aggression could be likened to the Fulanis' justification on why they attacked ten Agatu communities of Benue State on February 10<sup>th</sup> 2016 and massacred hundreds of persons. According to the leader of the Gan Allah Fulanis Association, the conflict was a reprisal attack against the killing of their prominent son by the people of Agatu who stole his cattle in April 2013 (Mayah, Tukur & Adebayo, 2016). This scenario depicts three years of frustration or grudge against the Agatus and perhaps repeated unsuccessful plots for attack, until the farmers' reaction on crops destruction by the herds triggered the aggression from the herdsmen.

### *Conflict Theory*

The lead proponent of this theory is Karl Marx (1818-1883). He was a victim of marginalization due to his revolutionary ideas and the misery of his alienation was seen through his two radical most famous works: *The Capital* and *Communist Manifesto* (Charles, 2005). Marx's conflict ideology is "an analysis of inequality under capitalism and how to change it through confrontation" (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2014:43). They argued that in capitalism, there is an inherent conflict of interests between two opposing classes. Rex in Kirby, Kidd, Koubel, Barter, Hope, Kirton, Madry, Manning and Triggs (1997:32) submits that "the most basic cause of the conflict between two groups is usually over access to material resources". However, the basic tenet of the theory is that two opposing groups in the society always struggle for limited or scarce resources. Each group struggles to attain or acquire more resources and because they are scarce, struggle ensues between them. Every group tries to protect its own interest, thus blocking the progress of another in accessing that (Idowu, 2017).

The land resources (such as farm lands, crops, grass/pasture, fresh water etc.) are scarce in Nigeria and needed by both farmers and herdsmen for sustenance of their various sources of livelihood. Conflict, however, would not only occur between herders and farmers as both strive with another in pursuit of these resources; but as either of the groups tries to intrude or exploit another's already secured and long acquired resources.

Again, as the herders who usually trake miles without their wives or certain about grazing fields in the various communities they visit, could possibly obtain sexual gratification forcefully or have their cattle fed in farm crops and would normally face confrontation for violation and destruction of crops. Similarly, conflict would likely arise when farmers who are in need of arable farm lands encroach into grazing reserves or criminals in the host communities try to steal cattle for economic gains. This is in tandem with Gbehe in Ofem and Inyang (2014) who pointed out that the pursuit of access to a variety of limited resources such as grasslands and water spots for animals gives rise to conflicts.

## **Factors influencing Herdsmen-Farmers Conflict in Nigeria**

Empirically, evidences have revealed various reasons for the continued conflict between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. Some of the factors that influence the conflict include;

*Damaging or Grazing on Crops:* The damaging or intentional grazing on crops has been pointed out as the most predominant cause of conflict between farmers and herdsmen (Adebayo & Olaniyi, 2008). In a recent study, Adeoye (2017) found deliberate grazing of cattle on crops, farmers' encroachment on grazing reserves, water holes and cattle paths and indiscriminate bush burning by herders as notable causes of conflict between the groups in parts of Kano, Yobe and Borno States of Nigeria. In another study by Adelakun, Adurogbangba and Akinbile (2015) in Oyo State, about 34.2% of the farmers and 6.7% of the pastoralists indicated that crop damage always triggers conflict between them.

*Changing Climatic Conditions:* The encroaching desert to the traditional abode of the pastoralists in the Sahel region has been identified as a factor for the continued clash as herders migrate southward where the grass is much lusher and often intrude into spaces long claimed or cultivated by settled farmers (Olaniyan *et al*, 2015). In Nasarawa State, the situation has been exacerbated by the phenomenon of climate change which dynamics tend to have been aggravating natural resource conflicts across the region (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014). Climate change and desert encroachment have made southward movements even more inevitable and confrontations with southern farming communities more frequent (Nwosu, 2017).

*Long-Standing Disagreements:* Burton (2016) noted that many of the recent attacks perpetrated by the Fulanis have stemmed from long-standing disagreements with various communities. For instance, Mayah *et al* (2016) reported that a Fulani leader alleged that the massacre of Agatu people by Fulanis was a reprisal attack against the killing of their prominent son by the people of Agatu in April 2013 who stole his cows. Mostly in the middle-belt, the conflict was found to have stemmed from a long history of feud over farm lands and herding. Preexisting communal conflicts have sustained the violence as herdsmen turned militants in the face of urbanization, desertification and the indifference of the Nigerian government to their plight (Burton, 2016).

*Scarcity of Fresh Water:* Fresh water scarcity seems to be an under-estimated and under-discussed resource issue facing the world today. It is obvious that the world's water demand grows every year in order to meet up with increasing population. Exacerbated by climate change, fresh water scarcity is creating security concerns in some parts of sub-Saharan Africa, especially in the semi-arid region (Audu, 2013). He argued that availability of water which is a major resource needed for agriculture is decreasing as a result of changes in global climatic conditions. Farmers and pastoralists who are the main agricultural practitioners in Nigeria depend on water resources to sustain their vocations. In recent times, access to water and grazing land have become more competitive and has led to violent conflicts on a regular basis between farmers and herdsmen. Jacobs (1980) noted that fresh water scarcity and insufficient rainfall are causes of social and economic ruins which have left the

pastoralists at the mercy of sedentary farmers' communities. Ofem and Inyang (2014) observed that contamination of stream by cattle have led to clashes in Yakurr, Cross River State, Nigeria.

### **Lack of Access to Farm or Grazing Fields**

The Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution in conjunction with United Nations Development Programme (IPCR-UNDP, 2012) traced the cause of the conflict in Guma and Makurdi LGAs of Benue State to the material needed for existence or survival which is the green of the land and fresh water. As the pastoralists need this for grazing and drinking purposes; the Tiv farmers at the same time need it for farming activities; thus they usually clash.

*Negligence:* This has been identified on the part of both groups as a cause of the conflicts. Yahaya (2008) observed that the herdsmen often left a large number of cattle in the care of children who do not know the consequences in the event of destruction of farm produce. On the other hand, he posits that most farmers usually left their harvested crops on their farm unprotected while others who had poor yield intentionally left them un-harvested for cattle to graze so that they could claim heavy compensation.

The Nigerian government is as well indicted in this accusation. Burton (2016) noted that government's silence or negligence on the need for increased grazing space has influenced the conflict. He also argued that the request is not new as the Fulani herdsmen have previously called on the government to rectify the situation. He maintained that there has been little action on the part of the government to resolve these problems and some quarters believe that it is just being politicized for selfish gains. The herdsmen therefore have grown restless and their impatience has culminated into violent actions.

*Disrespect of Traditional Authorities:* According to Ofem and Inyang (2014), many communities usually collect levies from local crop and livestock (poultry) farmers in their domain and herdsmen normally refuse to pay. This is often perceived as disregard and insult to the traditional authorities. The youth who constitute the local security are usually sent to collect that and the assignment is often met with strict resistance that results to clashes. Similarly, Ofuoku and Isife (2009) equally noted that one of the major causes of the conflict in Delta State communities is the disregard for the host traditional authority by the herdsmen.

*Increasing Urbanization:* The quest to join the league of developed societies has continued to pose a threat to certain agricultural activities in Nigeria. There is increasing erosion of farm and grass lands mostly needed by farmers for planting and herdsmen for grazing. This has deprived the pastoralists of valuable grassland, again forcing them to attempt to expand their "grass kingdom" (Burton, 2016).

Other issues identified were indiscriminate bush burning, sexual harassment of women by nomads, harassment of nomads by host youth, theft of cattle and indiscriminate defecation by cattle along the road (Ofem & Inyang, 2014). It is worthy of note that indiscriminate bush burning can lead to low productivity as a result of poor quality of farm lands. However, sexual harassment and rape of women

by nomads may lead to contraction of STDs, HIV/AIDS and high rate of unwanted pregnancies among the victims. Also, the defecation by cattle can cause environmental pollution which can pose a health hazard to the inhabitants of the affected areas.

### **Socio-Economic Effects of Herdsmen-Farmers Conflicts in Nigeria**

Clashes between cattle herders and crop farmers have been a major cause of increasing violence and general insecurity in Nigeria. There has been increasing economic adverse effects and social or relational implications such as;

*Loss of Human and Animal Lives:* In most of these encounters, human and animal lives were regularly lost (Aliyu, 2015). According to Burton (2016), on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016 Fulani militants killed four individuals in Benue State. Again, between 10 and 11<sup>th</sup> of the same month they killed about 17 persons in Taraba and 40 people were massacred in Enugu State on the 25<sup>th</sup> of that same month. Following a rivalry between the Tiv and Fulani ethnic groups, a total of 853 people have lost their lives since June 2014.

While the Fulani herdsmen claimed to have lost 214 people in addition to 3,200 cows, the Tiv people reportedly killed are estimated to be 633 excluding children and women who died in ramshackle camps in 2014. Moreso, six soldiers attached to the 72 battalion in Makurdi were said to be killed in the cross-fire that ensued between the two groups during the period (Abdulkarkindo & Alupse, 2015). They emphasized that five of the soldiers were killed in Agatu in January 2015 while one, a captain, was beheaded in Guma LGA of Benue State. So far, the Tiv people in Guma, Gwer-West, Makurdi and other towns at the border with Taraba state have recorded about 458 deaths and over 350 communities have been sacked and are now living in IDP camps.

**Destruction of Crops:** According to Ofuoku and Isife (2009), more than 40 million worth of crops are usually lost annually due to invasion of cattle in the South-South region of Nigeria, especially Delta and Edo States. This has not only created an impediment to the survival of the host communities but has forced many crop-farmers to abandon farming for lesser occupations like Okada (commercial motorcycling) riding and other artisan work. Aliyu (2015) argued that the conflict has continued to lead to destruction or loss of properties and crops in Katsina State leaving an already endangered populace even poorer.

The food security welfare of urban dwellers especially residents of Calabar that depend on these farmers for food supply has been negatively affected since the incessant clashes in Yakurr, which is predominantly a farming community and the prices of available food supply skyrocketed (Ofem & Inyang, 2014). A study conducted by Umeh and Chukwu (2016) in Ebonyi State indicated that the economic loss on both conflicting parties was huge and that the herdsmen seemed to have incurred more in monetary terms than the farmers. While the farmers lost lots of crops and farms to the conflicts, herdsmen lost several cattle and sheep. The reverse was the case in Oyo State, as Adelakun, Adurogbangba and Akinbile (2015) found that farmers were worst hit by the conflicts as it

affects their family farming and has led to reduction in farm output, loss of properties and scarcity of food.

*Reprisal Attacks:* Due to the failure of security agencies to control the excesses of the herdsmen, the youth in various communities of Ekiti State have on several occasions launched reprisal attacks on the cattle rearers' abodes ("Gaa"), sacking them and destroying their properties (Olugbenga, 2013). There are similar reports in various places in the country. Reports equally indicate similar reprisals in different farming communities.

*Displacement of Persons and Animals:* There were reports of displaced farmers and herdsmen alike. In the host communities, nomadic herdsmen relocate as a result of conflict. Host farmers especially women who stayed behind stop going to distant farms for fear of attack by nomads in the bush (Ofuoku & Isife, 2009). Such displaced farmers have become a source of liability to other farmers whom they have to beg for food for themselves and their families. This has created a vicious cycle of poverty in such communities. In Yakurr, Cross River State, Ofem and Inyang (2014) observed that herdsmen-farmers conflict has not only resulted to internal displacement of herdsmen and farmers, especially women; but also led to reduction in income/savings and crops output.

*Distrust between Herdsmen and Farmers:* Burton (2016) noted that majority of the members of the expanse Fulani ethnic group are solely pastoralists without connection to militant violence. Even these peaceful ones, however, are largely viewed with suspicion and anger by the sedentary communities on whose land they take their cattle, largely as a result of the actions of the violent group. This has created distrust and altered the mutual relationship that has existed between them and most of their host communities.

### **Anti-Fulani Sentiments**

It has been observed that the violent disposition of the Fulani herdsmen have given rise to anti-Fulani sentiment in some parts of the country and has also continued to instil hatred against them (Idowu, 2017). Some persons have cited a Fulani expansionist agenda as being behind these attacks. A Twitter hashtag to that effect, #MAFO (Movement Against Fulani Occupation) has been launched and there have been allegations of possible government collusion in this perceived expansionist agenda (Nwosu, 2017).

In Ebonyi, the conflict was found to have led to loss of peaceful co-existence, breakdown of established friendship, perpetual fear of attack and loss of family means of livelihood (Umeh & Chukwu, 2016). According to Burton, cooperation between innocent citizens, aggrieved Fulani herdsmen and the government is appearing hard to come by, hence, he suggests that the conflict will require multi-level cooperation if it is to be resolved peacefully.

*Disruption of Academic and other Activities:* The pupils and teachers of Ohonvbe Model Primary School in Ikpoba Okha LGA of Edo State were seen scattered in the premises under intense fear as

herdsmen left their cattle to invade class rooms during learning session (Channel News Live Report, 2017, June 8<sup>th</sup>). That day's academic activities were not only truncated but also the psychological trauma experienced by the pupils that forcefully ran out of classrooms for fear of harm may not be quantified. The herders were seen roaming the school premises and they left their cattle to move freely inside classrooms until the late intervention of some security personnel.

### **Conclusion**

The recurrent clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria portray a conflict of interests over resource acquisition or control. This is exacerbated by the climatic changes that continued to force the herdsmen out of their Northern abode to the Southern region in search of pasture and fresh water for their cattle. Hence, it has been observed that herdsmen-farmers conflicts are prevalent and the persistence of these conflicts leads to loss of lives and properties. Until this issue is amicably resolved and absolute cooperation enhanced among the parties; food and national security will continue to be threatened in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made for possible policy implementation:

1. Government should establish cattle grazing fields in the six geo-political zones of the country and out-law open grazing of cattle. This must be done through due consultation, dialogue or appeal to some aggrieved regions of the country which may oppose or resist the move.
2. Poor water management practice in the country should be improved by the Federal Ministry of Water Resources. This is in view of the fact that climate change cum water shortage and drought are the major reasons herdsmen are migrating southward in search of fresh water and grass for their cattle.
3. Herdsmen should be properly educated or re-oriented on the sanctity of human lives, and taught how to use better channels of communication to convey their grievances than resorting to conflict.
4. Any form of aggression as a result of past issue(s) should be discouraged and anyone found wanting in that respect be prosecuted.

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