

THE IMPACT OF THE FARMERS AND HERDSMEN CONFLICT ON WOMEN.

FATIMA MOHAMMED ALKALI

Department of Political Science,

Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, Nigeria

Abstract

The conflicts between farmers and herders have been the most fatal in Nigeria in the last five years. It has led to loss of lives, displacement of persons and loss of properties worth billions of Naira. From the economic consequences of scarcity of food and loss of jobs to the political consequences of threatening the unity of the country, the farmers and herders conflict is a serious national issue. While there is a consensus among scholars of the devastating effects of the conflict, only a few studies have looked at the impact of the conflict on women and sought to explain how women are the biggest victims. This is what the paper sets out to examine. The paper adopts the frustration-aggression theory as its theoretical framework of analysis to analyze the conflict. Data was gotten through secondary sources and analyzed using the thematic analysis method. The paper concluded that women are the biggest victims of the conflict and asserted that there is a need for government to step up efforts to address the menace or risk watching the entire country go up in flames. To solve the problem, the paper recommended that government should combat climate change, facilitate concrete negotiations among stakeholders, improve the country's security system, engage political actors to desist from over-politicization of the conflict and intensify the promotion and implementation of ranching.

Keywords: Herdsmen, Farmers, Conflict, Ranching, Frustration-Aggression, Agriculture

Introduction

The farmers-herders conflict has a long and complex historical background. The land disputes among nomadic pastoralists and sedentary farmers is nothing new. However, it has transformed into a destructive and violent conflict since the beginning of twenty first century (Egbuta, 2018). According to International Crisis Group (2017), Nigeria is a vast country with different climates in different regions. It has arid, semi-arid, sub-humid and humid zones, which all allow different kinds of lifestyles and means of living. The climate and the land are significant factors in Nigerian people's lives, since around 70% of the manpower works in agriculture.

As a result of the impact of deforestation and climate change, traditional herders are migrating southwards in search of resources for their cattle. In the course of this migration, they have come in contact with farmers due to the fact that their cattle encroach into the farms of these farmers. These contacts between farmers and herders have become violent because farmers accused herders of leading their cattle to eat up their crops and destroy their farms. The herders on the other hand, have accused of farmers or members of the host community where they migrated to of attacking them and their cattle. This has led to violent reprisals. Today, the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria has evolved into having ethnic and religious dimensions. The pastoralist herders who mostly live in the north are called "Fulani" people. Fulani's are considered as settlers by other ethnicities in Nigeria, as they started to move to this region from other parts of Western Africa around fifteenth century. Fulani people founded an Islamic Caliphate in today's northern Nigeria and after that they became politically more effective in the region. Some Fulani migrated southwards and got mixed with the local Hausa people. Today there are pastoralist and nomadic

Fulanis who mainly live in the north. And the urbanized Fulanis (they are called Hausa-Fulani) live more in the south. Both groups speak Fulfude language and are Muslims. They have many commonalities however, urban Fulanis are considered being more politically wise and preeminent than nomadic Fulanis (Maiangwa, 2017). The conflict has led to the loss of lives and properties as well as the destruction of communities. In the past 5 years, this conflict has overtaken the Boko Haram menace as the leading security problem in the country. It is against this background that this study intends to examine the impact of the conflict on women.

Statement of Problem

The resultant 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. The conflict has not only heightened the level of insecurity, but has also demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the food crisis in Nigeria and other affected countries due to loss of farmer lives, animals, crops and valuable properties (Cotula, Toulmin & Hesse, 2004). Billions of naira have been lost and thousands of lives too. Affected persons have lost their means of livelihood and have been forced to live in internally displaced camps spread across the six geopolitical zones in the country. While there is a consensus among scholars such as McGregor (2014), Gursoy (2020) and Okoro (2018) that the conflict has inflicted severe damage on Nigerians however, there are limited studies on how this conflict affects women and this is the gap this study intends to fill.

Literature review

The Fulani originated from the Senegambia before spreading out into about 20 states which cut across West Africa and the Sahel as well as western Sudan and Central African Republic (McGregor, 2014). The people are found in large number in Nigeria but while some have moved into the cities, many are still living as semi-nomadic herders. However, these group who own and rear herds of animals like cattle for commercial purposes are called herdsmen. Fulani herdsmen or Fulani pastoralists are nomadic or semi nomadic herders whose primary occupation is raising livestock (Iro 1994, p. 22). They usually move their herds from one place to another in search of pasture and fresh water. It is predominantly the occupation of the Fulani ethnic group in Nigeria. They are often seen moving about with weapons (like daggers, machets, arrows etc) to protect their livestocks. The more disturbing issue about the herdsmen is that they also block the highways with their cattle, rob and kidnap people, keep them captives in the bush and demand for ransom. The herdsmen have also been involved in the rape of old and young women and burning of communities (The Vanguard, 2015). 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).

Farmers (also called are persons who engage in agriculture, raising living organisms for food or raw materials. The term therefore applies to people who do some combination of raising field crops, orchards, vineyards, poultry, or other livestock. Based on this broad definition, farmers are both the herdsmen who herd or keep livestock like cattle, goats and sheep, and crop farmers. However, for the purpose of this work, farmers are the crop farmers (those who raise field crops) also called peasant farmers/subsistence cultivators only.

According to Gursoy (2020), the herdsmen-farmers conflict is as old as the existence of man. There has been earlier biblical allusion that opined that the conflict can be seen in the Bible to have started from the children (Cain and Abel) of the first man (Adam). Abel was a shepherd and Cain was a farmer according to Bible's account, however, Cain killed Abel in the field out of jealousy.

Okoro (2018) averred that herdsman-farmer or herder-farmer conflicts are conflicts occurring between peasant farmers or subsistence cultivators and nomadic or transhumant live-stock keepers.

According to Hagmann (2003), there exist differences between 'herder-herder' conflicts and 'farmer-herder' conflicts. He maintained that herder-herder conflicts are usually conflicts between nomadic or transhumant livestock keepers that arise between receiving groups over their territory's resources and incoming groups searching for water and pastures, and cattle raiding. Herder-herder conflict is a conflict that results from theft of cattle or other animals among the Fulani herdsman. It is herdsman rustling cattle of other herdsman, or when un-experienced herders entrust their animals in the care of experienced herders under agreements, and when such agreements are breached conflict occasions within. The violent cattle raids among pastoralists in East Africa are examples of herder-herder conflicts. Hussein, Sumberg, and Seddon, (1999) see farmer-herder conflicts as comprising different types of conflicts, including ethnic conflicts, interest conflicts, resource disputes, political action, evictions, killings, cattle raiding and cattle rustling.

According to Gursoy (2020), the farmers-herdsman conflict has been traced to the beginning of agriculture and either increased or decreased in intensity or frequency depending on economic, environmental and other factors (Aliyu, 2015). In his study, Idowu (2017) noted that the violence between herdsman and farmers has displaced more than 100,000 people in Benue and Enugu States and left them under the care of relatives or in dilapidated Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps, while many are still struggling to rebuild their lives. 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. Amnesty International (as published in New Telegraph) on January 29th 2018 asserted that the conflict between herdsman and farmers has killed 168 people in January, 2018 alone. According to Amnesty International, "The Nigerian authorities' response to communal violence is totally inadequate, too slow and ineffective, and in some cases unlawful. Clashes between herdsman and farmers in Adamawa, Benue, Taraba, Ondo and Kaduna have resulted in 168 deaths in January 2018 alone. Hundreds of people lost their lives in 2017, and the government is still not doing enough to protect communities from these violent clashes. For instance, 549 deaths were recorded across 14 states while thousands were displaced in 2017. These 549 deaths and thousand has occurred in Benue, Taraba, Zamfara, Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Cross Rivers, Adamawa, Katsina, Delta and Ekiti states between the period of 2017 – 2020 (Gursoy, 2020).

In his own contribution, Taiwo (2010) averred that armed conflict between herdsman and their host communities had been reported to have taken place in over 20 villages in Nigeria, including, Ago Nla, Ago Kekere, Idi Ope Kekere, Olukore, Olokuta, Apena, Jaramosan, Akeeran, Alagigo, Aaaro, Temidire, Iya Ibadan, Ideto, Apapa, Akele, Agwo, Bodija, Olufayo, Oko Teku, Moniya, Oke Ogun, Shaki, Egbedore. Ilobu, Efon Alaye, Alu, and Iya moye. Also, the study carried out by Sulaiman and Ja' afar to ascertain the economic effects of this type of conflict in Bauchi state from 2003 to 2007 discovered that: Livestock that were lost through the farmers-pastoralists conflict included 34 cattle and 11 sheep/goats, valued about 1.8 million Naira and N66, 000.00 for cattle and sheep/goat, respectively. Six persons lost their lives during the period with anticipated economic contribution valued at N2, 844,000.00. The number of persons injured in the farmer-pastoralists conflict as revealed by the study was 45 among whom 15 persons were incapacitated that they could not perform their economic activities during the period of treatment. The cost implication due to the body injuries of those affected in this respect was about N2.64 million. In

addition, a research carried out on the causes and effects of the perennial clashes between herdsman and farmers in Nigeria by Mercy Corps between 2013 and 2016, funded by the British Department for International Development (DFID) revealed that the conflict uncured losses of about \$14 billion in potential revenues annually to Nigeria. Meanwhile, the usual resultant effects of the conflict are loss of lives, crops, destruction of houses, displacement of persons, decline in income, distrust; as well as threat to food and national security (Gursoy, 2020).

Olu-Adeyemi (2017) posits that a number of other variables influence the use of violence as well, for example the culture, the society, and the political environment. The culture must at least accept, if not approve, violent action as a means to an end. Violence is also more likely if the current leadership and/or the socio-economic/political system is seen as unresponsive. Olu-Adeyemi also asserted that scarcity is the product of insufficient supply (impact of climate population explosion) or unequal distribution of resource as a result of deprivation which ultimately leads to aggression. There is a challenge of frustration among citizens. The issue of frustration, means that one's access to means of livelihood (farming or grazing as the case may be) is being thwarted by another or possibly by particular circumstances and that one's reaction to this thwarting is that of annoyance. Olu-Adeyemi also added that, deprivation is not based on wants or needs alone, but on the wants and needs that we feel we ought to have or deserve. More often than not, the herdsman are frustrated due to desertification, thus, the reality is that they face forced migration and as they migrate, series of challenges are encountered which in turn brings frustration. Similarly, farmers who have struggled to cultivate farmlands also get frustrated whenever herds of cattle destroy their farmlands. The Fulani Herdsmen terror is a struggle over values and claims to scarce resources in which their aims are to neutralize, injure or to eliminate the host communities in a bid to fend for their animals. The violent activities of the Fulani Herdsmen occur because of the accumulation of residual instigatory effects of frustration. The terrorist activities of the herdsman are traceable to the desertification that has caused depletion in grazing opportunities or scarcity of feed for their animals which in the long-run affects their economic wellbeing. If a herdsman loses his flock to drought and water scarcity, he may be frustrated because of the loss of livelihood. From this reality, he may be aggressive and since, he cannot channel it to the natural causes, he may in the long-run channel it to any person or group that obstructs his migration to a safe area. On the side of farmers and host communities in Nigeria, frustration also occurs whenever animals of the herdsman trample on their farmlands to eat up their crops. And because they are frustrated too, they become aggressive and channel their aggression to the herdsman and their cows. Owing to this reality, conflict and confrontation is inevitable (Gursoy, 2020; Okoro 2018).

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts the frustration aggression theory as its framework of analysis. Frustration-aggression theory, a strand of the relative-deprivation school of thought is a theory of conflict proposed by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer and Robert Sears in 1939 and further developed by Neal Miller in 1941 and Leonard Berkowitz in 1961 (Gursoy, 2020; Okoro, 2018). The theorists posit that aggression is the result of blocking, or frustrating, a person's efforts to attain a goal (Friedman Schustack, 2014). When first formulated, the theory argued that frustration always precedes aggression, and aggression is the sure consequence of frustration. Two years later, however, Miller and Sears re-formulated the theory to suggest that while frustration creates a need to respond, some form of aggression is one possible outcome. Therefore, the re-formulated theory argued that while frustration prompts a behavior that may or

may not be aggressive, any aggressive behavior is the result of frustration, making frustration not sufficient, but a necessary condition for aggression (ZillmannDolf, 1979). This explanation attempts to give an explanation as to the cause of violence. Frustration as a condition usually exists in the event that the goal of an individual is supposed to response to suffers a form of interference. Aggression involves goal-response which originated as an act that causes injury to other living organism (or an organism surrogate). The theory asserts that frustration causes aggression, however, the challenge is that when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the act of aggression gets displaced onto an innocent target (scapegoat). This theory is also used to explain riots and revolutions, which both are believed to be caused by poorer and more deprived sections of society who may express their bottled up frustration and anger through violence (Okoro, 2018).

Methodology

This paper adopts the qualitative method of research. The documentary method of data collection was adopted as data used in this study was gotten from secondary sources such as books, journals articles, book chapters, newspaper reports, internet sources and official reports. As its method of data analysis, the data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Impact of the conflict on women

The challenge of farmers-herders' conflict has led to the loss of live, loss of livelihood and internal displacement. These issue are the subject of discussion in this segment.

Loss of lives

Women are the most vulnerable in the farmers-herdsmen conflict (Amnesty, 2020). After several killings of farmers by nomadic herders in the beginning of 2000s, reprisal attacks and armament of farmer communities started in Nigeria. Reports from Amnesty International confirms this assertion. Also, sometimes pastoralists' cattle were killed as a response to herdsmen. The communities experience great hostility against each other. In the reprisal attacks that always take place, women are at the receiving end. This includes women in agriculture and those that are not. When these reprisals happen, villages are attacked; households are destroyed, vulnerable women and their children are killed. This is the case in southern Kaduna, Niger, Zamfara, Edo, Osun, Enugu, Plateau and other areas affected by this conflict. The loss of a husband to the conflict creates a vacuum in the family and often thrust women into the unprepared role of breadwinners and decision making not just for their immediate family but also for members of the extended family who are wounded, sick, despairing and displaced as a result of the conflict. Women are also the worst hit when children and youths are consumed in the conflict. The death of a child can be very traumatizing for a woman. This is perhaps the greatest psycho-social impact of the farmers-herder crisis on women, most of which develop mental health problems for life. This is why there have been several protests by women in Kaduna, Edo, Plateau and Bayelsa respectively.

Loss of Livelihood

Women in agriculture are adversely affected by the conflict. Most women who are farmers are scared of returning to their farms because of fear of being attacked. According to Gursoy (2020), the protracted conflict in Nigeria has caused and still causing several socio-economic problems for its people. One of the effects of the conflict is on agriculture, which supposed to be improving constantly to be able to sustain the basic nutritional needs of rapidly grown population. The agriculture sector has not improved fast enough as the state and local governments do not invest in

farming technologies and infrastructure as it does with other sectors such as the oil production sector. As a result of not having enough food produced, farmers try to increase their agricultural lands which causes conflict between them and the herders. The crops also get damaged during the encounter with animals, as they just eat what they find and sometimes the herdsmen are not able to control their animals and sometimes they intentionally let them graze in the cultivated areas. The negative effects of the conflict in agriculture create a vicious circle of bigger problems, which the citizens are not able to get rid of by themselves. The unattractiveness of agriculture caused by this conflict has led to the increase in unemployment among the many women involved in agriculture (Ofuoku & Isife, 2010).

Internal Displacement

Women make up a higher percentage of persons that have been internally displaced by the farmers-herders conflict. Women from communities face poverty and all manners of evils after being displaced. This is because they are forced to live in internally displaced persons' camps where they are subjected to all forms of human right abuse by camp officials. Women in internally displaced camps are being sexually abused or forced to engage in sex-for-food by camp officials. According to a report by International Crisis Group (2020), displaced women expressed concerns over loss of economic resources often from leaving their cultivated farms as most of the produce are harvested in their absence by unknown persons. Furthermore, in terms of displacement, women suffer the most because they move with the children while men largely move in groups as individuals and in camp meant for displaced persons. Women become victims of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) (International Crisis Group, 2018).

Conclusion

The farmers and herdsmen conflict has cost the nation huge loss of lives and properties. As a result of this conflict, agriculture value chain has been disrupted leading to loss of jobs and scarcity of food in the country. Women have been the biggest victims. Majority of farmers who are women have stayed away from their farms which is their only means of livelihood while many others have fallen victims to the incessant attacks on communities across the country by herdsmen. With series of cases in states in the northern parts of the country such as Kaduna, Niger and Plateau; cases in south western states such as Oyo, Ondo, Ekiti and Ogun; cases in south eastern states such as Enugu and Ebonyi; cases in the south-southern states such as Edo and Bayelsa, the conflict is a national problem and it is one of the major threats to the unity of the country. There is still time for action. This is why addressing the conflict is an urgent need. Government needs to step up to address this menace before it causes the entire country to blow up.

Recommendations

- Government should combat Climate Change:Desertification, which is one of the biggest drivers of the conflict, directly or indirectly, threatens the lives of everyone in Nigeria. The desert grows southwards each year around 600 meters. This means if it is not stopped, soon the people of Nigeria will face bigger environmental and economic problems. The government should work on reforestation, prevent the pollution of environment, encourage the usage of organic pesticides etc. If it can restore the lost land for agriculture, this will help both farmers and the herders. The Economic Committee of West African States (ECOWAS) and Nigerian government should work together and include neighboring countries in the fight against the effect of climate change and

desertification.

- Conflicting Parties and relevant Stakeholder should be involved in serious negotiations aimed at addressing the differences: The government should foster dialogue by bringing conflicting parties together, especially at local levels. Traditional and community leaders should be involved in direct dialogue between farmers and herder communities. This may help both sides to understand each other better and reduce the hostilities. There are some negotiation attempts going on in the region but most of them are either local initiatives or international NGOs' (non-governmental organization) efforts (Center for Humanitarian Dialogue). To be able to have sustainable and fruitful talks between the groups it should be funded and observed by federal, state and local government. Local community leaders, religious leaders and local NGOs should actively take part in the talks and represent their communities' interests.
- Government should improve security in the country: Most of the violent attacks on farmers and herder communities could have been avoided if the security agencies are properly equipped to live up to their responsibilities. Poor and late intelligence gathering as well shortage of personnel and the ever persistent problem of under-equipping of security personnel have resulted in more destruction and failure to avert impending calamities. Government has to step up efforts in equipping and training security personnel in the country. There is a great need to encourage community policing and promote cooperation between communities and security agencies.
- The Over-politicization of the conflict should be addressed: Government should work with political actors towards the de-escalation of tensions caused by politicians who seek to gain cheap political points by emphasizing on the religious and ethnic coloration of the conflict. This has worsened the effect of the conflict and has caused the conflicting parties to develop more hostile relationship between them. Politicians should be cautioned to desist from such acts and collaborate with government and affected communities towards finding lasting solutions to the problem.
- Government should be serious about promoting and implementing Ranching: Open grazing is an ancient and outdated way of rearing cattle. Government should intensify efforts towards the development of modern cattle ranches across the country so as to prevent the movement of herdsmen and their cattle into farmlands. Ranching has been identified as a more profitable way of rearing cattle and it is a practice adopted internationally by some of the most successful countries Denmark and Holland in the cattle business. In addition to being a solution to the conflict, ranching can also add to the economy by creating direct and indirect jobs. In 2017, The Federal Agriculture Ministry organized a conference with the support of United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and they suggested a plan in the end for gradual transition of nomadic herders into sedentary life and creation of ranches. The so-called National Ranch Development Plan (NRLP) is a ten-year plan which aims creating ranches for herders and supporting them financially. At the same time the plan will support improving the grazing reserves (Onochie, 2018). The plan is approved by the parliament in February 2019 to be implemented immediately in pilot states (Agrospan, 2019). Government should speed up its adoption and implementation of this programme.

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