FARMERS-HERDERS CONFLICT AND HUMAN SECURITY IN NORTHEAST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the farmers-herders conflict and analyzed its impact on human and food security in Northeast Nigeria. The primary objective of the paper is to explore the causes and consequences of the conflict on human and food security. Historically, farmers and herders in the region maintained a symbiotic relationship characterized by centuries of peaceful coexistence, which has devolved into violent clashes over the past decade. The root causes of the conflict are tied to struggles over access to and control of land, water, and pasture. This resource-based and development-induced conflict has been aggravated by supply-induced scarcity, climate change, population growth, and the absence of proactive government policies. The study employed a qualitative approach and a phenomenological research design to gather primary data. Data collection methods included Focus Group Discussions (FGD), Key Informant Interviews (KII), and Direct Observations. The theoretical framework is Environmental Scarcity Theory (EST), developed by Homer-Dixon. Findings indicate that the conflict is fundamentally resource-based, driven by policy failures of successive governments. Key conflict drivers identified include the open grazing system, child-herding, night grazing, the implementation of Anti-Open Grazing Laws, and climate change. The paper recommends several measures: the establishment of grazing reserves, resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) with appropriate compensation, the use of a nomadic migration calendar for seasonal movements, the initiation and implementation of multi-stakeholder dialogues, and the application of African alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to resolve the conflict.

Keywords: farmers/herders conflict, human security, internally displaced persons

Introduction

Historically, relations between farmers and herders have been symbiotic, harmonious and peaceful. These relationship over the years have been of economic benefits to the herders and farming communities globally. However, in the early twentieth century, some herders started shifting their migratory routes across the Sahel, the semi-arid zone south of the Sahara Desert as a result of the climatic changes aggravated by drought and desertification (International Crisis Group, 2017; World Bank, 2023).

Crop farmers and cattle herders live a symbiotic relationship for a very long time in West Africa and Nigeria. On one hand, herders move their cattle to graze on farmlands belonging to crop farmers or settled on the land to fertilize it with cattle dungs. While on the other hand, farmers exchange herders' milk and other dairy products for food. The relationship between the two remains complimentary as they share land, water, pasture, and other resources for their livelihoods.

However, this symbiotic relationship becomes strained in recent years due to increased human population and livestock, urbanization and industrialization, environmental degradation, agricultural expansion, and the use of technology in both farming and pastoralism. This development is marked by the 21st century human and scientific advancement that has impacts on socio-economic development, ecology and agricultural practices (Blench, 2004; Oruonye, Ahmed & Fatima, 2020).

The evolution of technology in agriculture is marked by scarcity of resources and land pressure, which increases the likelihood of clashes and conflict between farmers and nomads (Homer-Dixion, 1991; 1994). In the past, due to mutual dependency and abundance of resources, conflict between farmers and pastorals usually occurred only during critical periods in the production calendar (sowing and harvesting). The problem now is accentuated by the powerlessness of the pastoralists and the gradual shift of power to the agriculturalists that do not suffer much from the scarcity of land resources and are not transhumance (Shettima & Tar, 2008).

The Lake Chad Basin (LCB) has been one of the battlefields for these conflicts in recent years. The basin's economic potential for both farming and herding attracted herders from other ecological zones of neighboring countries; Chad, Niger, Mali and Cameroon to settle in the hinterlands of the Nigerian lake basin. The LCB water resources has decreased in the last decade due to climate change and other human activities. Indeed, violence and competition became common and widespread between the newly arrived herders and their host communities leading to several killings and destruction (Ahmadu, 2011; Amnesty International, 2018).

Unfortunately, the controversial Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) policy of the Federal Government of 2019 was rejected and the Anti-Open Grazing Law of 2017 in Taraba SAAtate (the only State in Northeast to banned open-grazing) was suspended while the clashes that claimed thousands of lives and destroyed properties worth billions continued unabated between the herders and farmers over trespass of land and the vicious cycle of violence in the country at large (FGN, 2019; Taraba State Government, 2017; Human Rights Watch, 2018). It is against this backdrop that this study will investigate the causes of the farmers and herders conflict and examines its impact on human and food security in Northeast, Nigeria.

Conceptual Discourse

The Concept of Farmers-Herders Conflict

In general terms, conflict is the incompatibilities or differences of interests or goals between two groups. Conflict is part of social problems, which is inevitable. Social settings are only complete when conflict exists because even though it has disadvantages, there are some advantages to conflict. For instance, if the farmers-herders conflict will push the government to introduce reforms in grazing practices that would solve the incessant clashes and killings in the country. The

farmers-herders conflict has become a national security problem in Nigeria due to its violent nature, frequency, and wider impact.

Onuoha and Ochuba (2018) asserted that the farmers-herders conflict is an intractable conflict that has engulfed the entire Sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria's hinterlands. They adduced some reasons why the farmers-herders conflict has been intractable based on the rationale of why the herdsmen attack and will continue to attack. In their analysis, there are three reasons from theoretical postulations to explain that which include but are not limited to Islamic religious school, Ethnic expansionists school, and Environmental politics school. The Islamic religious view proposes that the herdsmen are Muslims who are also terrorists who want to Islamize Nigeria like the Boko Haram. This is linked to the Abuja Declaration of 1989 on the propagation of Islam in Africa by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

The Ethnic expansionist school sees herdsmen as part of the Fulani agenda, whereby the cattle breeders are looking for settlement for expansionism. Historically, the Uthman Dan Fodio Jihad had replaced the Hausa Kingship system with the Fulani dynastic rule in Northern Nigeria since 1804. The Environmentalist Politics School believes that climate change, desert encroachment, and desertification are the consequent causes of the pastoralists moving southward to look for greener pastures. The last argument is the position in which this study aligns with the explanation of the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria.

Fisher (2000) explains that conflict can generally cause positive change in government and socioeconomic aspects of society if it is properly handled. This is achieved by understanding its dynamics and settling established disputes among competing groups. According to Katz (1965), he identified three sources of conflict: economic conflict, value conflict, and power conflict. He emphasized that conflict erupts because of competition over limited or scarce resources. Groups or individuals get involved in such a conflict with the fundamental objective of gaining control over limited resources through fair or foul means. The farmer-herders conflict is a resource conflict over land, water, forest, pastures, minerals, and even oil that are economical and scarce.

Therefore, the above explanation points to the fact that a combination of sources triggers conflicts, and it is rare to have a conflict with a single source. The farmers-herders conflict is caused by access, use, and control of natural resources, particularly fresh water and grazing areas. The denial of access, a trespass into farmlands, and the competition to use fresh water combined to create skirmishes between the farmers and herders who live in the same area or, in some cases, as transhumance.

Blench (2003) notes that for a very long time, farmers allowed herders to stay in their farming fields, where cattle deposit manure from their dung. On the other hand, after harvest, the farmers allow the herders to graze freely on their farm fields from the ruminants of harvested crops. This is no longer the practice in the last decade, indicating the deterioration of the symbiotic relationship enjoyed in the past between the farmers and the herders.

The Concept of Human Security

Various academics have applied and comprehended the concept of human security in different ways. The context, together with the reasons and locations for which it is being used as an explanatory framework, is crucial. Applications of human security are multifaceted in the social sciences and the study of human society. There are two dynamics, according to the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (2003). First, human security is required to address the intricacy and interdependence of both recent and old security concerns, such as international terrorism, people trafficking, chronic and ongoing poverty, ethnic conflict, climate change, pandemics, and abrupt economic and financial downturns. Such threats tend to acquire transnational dimensions and move beyond traditional notions of security that focus on external military aggression alone (UNDP, 1994; UNTFHS, 2003).

Second, human security must be implemented as a complete strategy that makes use of numerous new opportunities in order to address these risks in a coordinated fashion. Therefore, traditional methods cannot be used to combat threats to human security on their own. Rather, they call for a fresh agreement that recognizes the connections and mutual reliance among national security, human rights, and development (CHS, 2003). Paris (2001) claims that in security studies, the idea of human security is highly controversial. The state-centric, human-centric, and development-centered paradigms are the three main paradigms into which the human security approach is divided in this study.

State-Centric Paradigm of Human Security

This is a reference to the conventional or outdated human security approach paradigm. The state has historically been considered the object to be secured, or what is referred to as a referent object, and it has done so by using force of arms (Collins, 2007). Ever since the field of international relations was founded, realism has dominated the field. In this age of globalization, the susceptibility of states, individuals, and their belongings is astounding. Humanity is now aware of the need for security (Maiangwa & Waziri, 2010). Prior to the United Nations' founding, the idea of human security was widely accepted.

The core of realism is statism. This approach places special emphasis on the state as the only source of security and state sovereignty. States have been viewed as the primary players in the international system ever since the Treaty of Westphalia was signed in 1648. Authors like Hobbes, Rousseau, and Machiavelli saw the international system as a cruel place where governments compete with one another to gain security at the expense of their neighbors (Baylis, 2001).

During the Cold War, when the US and the Soviet Union were at odds with one another and believed that the only way to attain security was by increasing military might, this realist viewpoint reached its pinnacle. The main goal of Soviet and American security strategy was to protect the state from military assaults from without. However, as the Cold War was coming to an

end, traditional security was under attack. The conventional understanding of security began to change in the 1980s (Baylis, 2001).

Buzan (1983) attempted to expand the definition of security by claiming that security research shouldn't be exclusive to the military. However, at the conclusion of the Cold War, conventional security was called into question. The conventional understanding of security began to change in the 1980s. Politics, the economy, society, and the environment are only a few of the newly significant factors that affect state security (Buzan, 1983; Buzan et al., quoted in Lin, 2011).

Therefore, the farmers-herders conflict is an international security challenge. From the state-centric paradigm, the idea of collective security can be applied. The context of seeking security through collective means in the international community was conceived over centuries by Immanuel Kant in his idea for universal history from the cosmopolitan point of view (1784). His idea evolved into attempts to secure peace through such international structures as the Concert of Europe, the League of Nations, and, subsequently, the United Nations. The fundamental idea of international security is contained in the UN Charter. Article 1 commits all members to maintain international peace and security. Moreover, to that end, effective collective measures must be taken to preserve or restore peace (Maiangwa & Waziri, 2010).

Human-Centric Paradigm of Human Security

Another name for it is a people-centered paradigm. It is an unconventional approach to security. Human security is a people-centered concept that puts the individual at the "center of analysis." Krause and others refer to the human-centric approach as having "three axes," and this approach allows critical security experts to embrace a far broader concept of security. The first axis, or the horizontal drive, aims to expand the traditionalists' limited concept of security to cover what is thought to be other categories of risks to the state, such as threats from uncontrolled population mobility, the environment, and the economy. Beyond the state-centric perspective comes the second, related axis, known as the vertical push. The goal above is to expand the definition of security to encompass a wider range of referents: personal security, also known as human security, is at one extreme, while global security is at the other, and regional and social security is in between. A third axis that is still state-centric but addresses ways to improve state security encourages collaboration amongst security actors through common, cooperative, collective, and all-encompassing security measures.

As a result, it takes into account a wide range of circumstances that endanger life, livelihood, and dignity and establishes the point at which the safety of human existence is irreversibly jeopardized. Because of this, it is an interdisciplinary idea that exhibits the qualities of being comprehensive, multi-sectoral, prevention-oriented, people-centered, and context-specific (UNDP, 1994). A multi-sectoral understanding of insecurity is also the foundation of human security. Human security, thus,

requires a broader view of risks and encompasses factors that contribute to insecurity in areas such as the economy, food, health, environment, personnel, community, and politics (CHS, 2003).

This inter-connectivity suggests that human insecurities cannot be addressed in isolation through disjointed stand-alone measures, which have significant policy consequences. Rather, human security entails all-encompassing strategies that emphasize the necessity of collaborative, multi-sectoral solutions that integrate the goals of security, development, and human rights. "With human security [as] the objective, there must be a stronger and more integrated response from communities and states around the globe" (CHS: 2003, p. 2).

According to Lodgaard (2000), security should be rethought as a "dual concept of state security and human security." Both are involved in security. Defense of a state's territorial integrity and the right to choose one's form of government are central to the concept of security of states or national security. Global state security is occasionally achieved by collective defense and occasionally through collective security. However, it is only sometimes likely applied and understood.

Fwa (2005) asserts that the human security approach's focus on structural violence resulting from non-territorial security threats is one of its main defining characteristics. This is centered on people's rights to be free from abuse, rape, unfair incarceration, torture, hunger, and terror. Structural violence can also manifest as violence, political marginalization, limited political and economic rights, and denial of access to governmental institutions. It promotes the notion that every individual or group of people has the right to a particular standard of development, better access to resources, social and political empowerment, and increased human security.

Human security theorists identified the failure of the government to provide basic amenities of life and good governance to its citizens as the fundamental reason for social tension, ethnic conflicts, and general insecurity. For example, the Niger Delta militancy, ethno-religious conflicts in Kaduna, Jos, and Kano, IPOB, Boko Haram insurgency, kidnapping and banditry, and farmers-herders conflict have an indirect connection to the state failure in Nigeria to curb or manage the intractable conflicts.

Development-Centric Paradigm of Human Security

It encompasses a wider spectrum of players, including local communities, international organizations for development, international organizations, civil society, and the government itself. This method is the result of numerous international socio-political, socioeconomic, and United Nations initiatives. Furthermore, the Copenhagen School's Critical Security Approach provides a clear explanation of the relationship between security and development. As a result, development and security are linked and essential to the process of societal and national development. According to McNamara (1968), development leads to security, and security can only exist with progress. Economic, social, and political advancement are all components of development, which is continuously redefined in response to new threats.

Human security, which is development-centric, holds that human rights, human development, and state security are all strength ened. It emphasizes people-centered, locally driven, comprehensive, and sustainable solutions while addressing the underlying causes of vulnerabilities. As a result, a wider variety of actors are involved, including the state, local communities, and international organizations, in addition to civil society. However, the goal of human security is not to replace governmental security. Rather, they complement one another: "State security and human security are interdependent and mutually reinforcing." State security cannot be achieved without human security, and vice versa (CHS: 2003:6).

The use of development has expanded since the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report was published. Human security is becoming more widely accepted as a theory to direct foreign policy and international development assistance, as well as a tool for policy-making in the areas of global humanitarian relief, development, and security programming. The protection and empowerment of the populace is what gives human security its strength and attractiveness as an operational tool for analysis, justification, and programming. Protection refers to tactics that improve the institutional and governance structures' capacities in order to defend the impacted community or communities against the risks that have been recognized. Empowerment includes strategies that build upon the capacities of the affected community (ies) to cope with the identified threats and to strengthen their resilience and choices to act on their behalf and those of others (UNDP, 1994). Thus, development-centered human security guarantees that security issues may be resolved using both top-down and bottom-up strategies. The rivalry between farmers and herders stems from the political economy of one party's urge to develop scarce resources at the expense of the other. This necessitates a long-term government program to address the problem.

The Concept of Food Security

Academic interest in food security is very recent. The interest follows the establishment of the United Nations after WWII to prevent future war and ensure collective security and global development. The concept of food security has evolved in the last thirty years to reflect changes in official policy thinking globally. Food security is difficult to measure because it involves broader terms like food production, distribution, and consumption. The term first originated in the mid-1970s, when the World Food Conference (1974) defined food security in terms of food supply - assuring the availability and price stability of basic foodstuffs at the international and national level. In 1983, FAO analysis focused on food access, leading to a definition based on the balance between the demand and supply side of the food security equation. In 1996, the formal adoption of the Right to Adequate Food marked a milestone achievement by World Food Summit delegates. It pointed the way towards the possibility of a rights-based approach to food security. Currently, over 40 countries have the right to food, which is enshrined in their constitutions (FAO, 1983; WFS, 1996).

In 1986, the highly influential World Bank Report on Poverty and Hunger focused on temporal dynamics of food insecurity. The report introduced the distinction between chronic food insecurity, associated with problems of continuing or structural poverty and low incomes, and transitory food insecurity, which involves periods of intensified pressure caused by natural disasters, economic collapse, or conflict. This was complemented by Sen's theory of famine (1981) which highlighted the effect of personal entitlements on food access, i.e., production, labor, trade, and transfer-based resources (World Bank, 1986; Clay, 2002).

Consequent to the above, the link between food security, starvation, and crop failure has become a thing of the past, and the analysis of food insecurity as a social and political construct has emerged. Subsequently, the right to food is not a new concept; it was first recognized in the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. This pointed the way towards the possibility of a rights-based approach to food security.

Food security is emphasized, and hunger should not be co-infused. Food security refers to the availability of food, whereas famine and hunger are the consequences of the non-availability of food. In other words, it is the result of food insecurity. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA, 2010) conceives food insecurity as limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways. Food security indicators and measures are derived from the country-level household income and expenditure surveys to estimate per capita calorie availability.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

The phenomenon of IDPs is a global problem that occurs as a result of human and natural disasters. In Nigeria, in particular, the population of IDPs is increasing as a result of the escalating insurgency and ethno-religious conflicts in the Northeast. The clashes recorded between farmers and herders have added to the complicated, already charged human security situation.

Humanitarian emergencies remain one of the biggest challenges of the twenty-first century, particularly in Nigeria (Shehu & Abba, 2020). Governments and international development agencies have been concerned about civilians' internal displacement and their vital need for human rights and protection. To address the plights of violent conflicts, this condition has called for collective action (Katlin, 2010). Unfortunately, the situation deteriorated due to the government's poor planning, inadequate resources, and lack of timely accessibility to victims of violent conflicts. Ramaswamy (2008) presented what he called the three critical sources of human displacement: war, natural calamities, including floods and earthquakes, and development-induced displacements. He also categorized natural disasters into three sub-dimensions, including sudden, slow displacement, and epidemic disease-induced displacement. This categorization is relevant as it has captured the war and human security dynamics of farmer-herder conflicts in Northeast Nigeria.

Asplet (2013) has determined a number of important variables that may contribute to displacement. First, there is armed conflict, which is a circumstance in which military forces are called upon to

intervene due to disagreements between two or more nations or non-state entities. People are frequently forced to evacuate because of their fear of attacks and because armed conflict causes socioeconomic structures to collapse. Second, an indiscriminate violent situation that is widespread. There does not need to be a clear objective here. The attack may be carried out by or directed towards unidentified persons involved in the dispute. The populace is typically left defenseless and exposed during this type of instability. Usually, the only course of action in this circumstance is to run for your life.

Third, natural or man-made disasters: A disaster is natural when it results from natural causes and man-made when it is caused by human activity. Natural disasters include floods, fire outbreaks, earthquakes, tsunamis, and droughts.However, disasters caused by humans could also include climate change-related events. These usually result in a large-scale population shift. Consequently, in the framework of these scenarios, states or non-state actors violate the human rights of certain targeted individuals. Targeting may occur for a variety of reasons, including political, economic, racial, ethnic, or religious. Usually, the victims run away in an attempt to find safety.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC, 2018), the four main stages of displacement are pre-displacement, acute displacement, stable displacement, and lasting solutions. Pre-displacement is a phase in which individuals are uprooted from their customary habitation for any number of reasons, including generalized violence, armed conflict, or other situations.

According to the ICRC, the stage of acute displacement entails the relocation of displaced individuals from their original communities to a new site. The IDPs typically find themselves in desperate need of protection and life-saving aid at this stage of displacement. One stage of displacement that is frequently called "prolonged displacement" is stable displacement. In this case, the displacement persists for an extended period. IDPs stay for a prolonged period with the host communities, private houses, or provided camps. The durable solution is a stage usually considered the last one.

When the IDPs find long-term solutions, displacement is considered to have ended. As a result, it might be realized by either resettling the displaced individuals in different parts of the nation than their original area or by enabling them to return to their original homes through integration into the host community. People who are internally displaced (yet to cross borders in search of protection. They are escaping their own country, unlike refugees. Even when their government is to blame for their displacement, internally displaced people (IDPs) stay in their nation and continue to enjoy the protection of their government. They often move to areas where it is difficult for us to deliver humanitarian assistance, and as a result, these people are among the most vulnerable in the world (UNCHR, 2021; ICRC, 2018).

A UNICEF research study states that 1.9 million people in Northeastern Nigeria currently do not have a place to live. Of them, one in four are under five years old, making about sixty percent of the total. 'Lost at Home' examines the threats and difficulties that internally displaced children encounter, as well as the immediate steps that must be taken to ensure their safety. These kids are among the most susceptible to the negative effects of disorders like COVID-19 and others, both directly and indirectly (UNICEF, 2021).

Methodology and Study Area

This paper employs survey research design. It is a phenomenological based on an ex-post facto approach. It adopts the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informats Interview (KII). It aims to capture the geography and effects of the farmers-herders conflict in the three selected Northeastern states of Adamawa, Gombe, and Taraba. This conflict, with a long historical background, has significantly impacted the political, social, and economic livelihoods of the local populations. Therefore, a qualitative method is chosen to interrogate, identify, and interpret the conflict as a social phenomenon, enabling the collection of diverse data to draw reliable inferences. Data generated in this paper aligns with the philosophical foundations of phenomenology and interpretivism. The results from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) are analyzed using thematic and narrative methods. Thematic analysis involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. This method enables the researcher to uncover underlying themes that emerge from the qualitative data, providing deeper insights into the participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes. By systematically coding the data and categorizing it into meaningful themes, thematic analysis helps in understanding the complex dynamics of the farmers-herders conflict, including the socio-economic, political, and environmental factors at play.

By combining descriptive statistics with thematic and narrative analyses, the study ensures a comprehensive approach to data analysis. Descriptive statistics offer a broad overview, while thematic and narrative methods provide in-depth qualitative insights. The data were sourced by purposive sampling techniques of 10 persons each from 18 LGAs of the 3 States (180) participants.
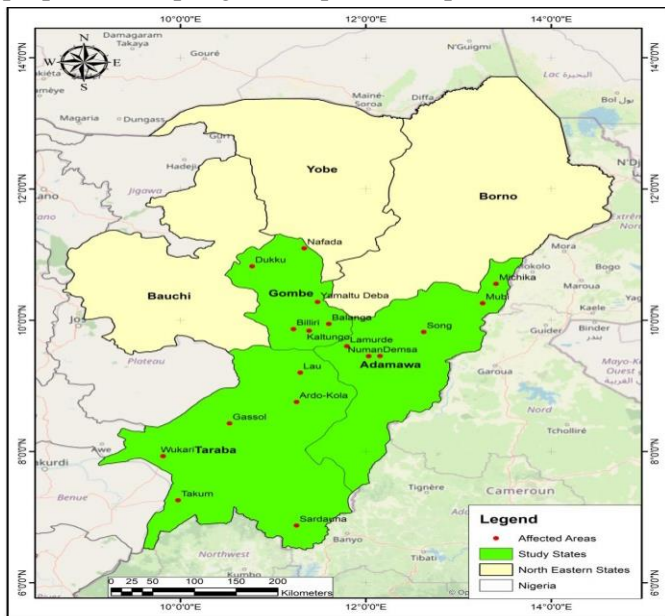
Figure 1 above shows the 18 LGAs that have a high incidence of farmers-herders conflict carefully selected. These selected LGAs in Adamawa State are Michika, Mubi, Song, Demsa, Lamurde, and Numan, while in Gombe State, the selected LGAs are Dukku, Yamaltu-Deba, Balanga, Billiri, and Kaltungo. Finally, in Taraba State, the selected LGAs are Ardo-Kola, Lau, Gassol, Sardauna, Takum, and Wukari. The selected LGAs were based on Northern, Central, and Southern Senatorial Districts in each of the three states.

Empirical Review of Literature on Farmers-Herders Conflict

Harshbarger (1995) conducted an empirical study titled "Farmer-Herder Conflict and State Legitimacy in Cameroon," which delved into the intricacies of conflict dynamics within the framework of the State-Society Approach in Africa. The research was conducted through fieldwork conducted over sixteen months between 1991 and 1992 in the Tugi and Wum villages situated in the Northwest province of Cameroon. Utilizing ethnographic research methods, survey data, and participant observation, the study aimed to explore the issues surrounding cattle trespassing and farm destruction, as well as the mediation processes employed to address resulting conflicts between farmers and herders.

The research encompassed the perspectives of various stakeholders, including state and local farmer-grazer dispute mediation officials, as well as herders, farmers, and chiefs representing three distinct ethnic groups within the villages under study. Through in-depth analysis and engagement with these diverse viewpoints, the study sought to provide insights into the underlying factors contributing to conflict escalation and the efficacy of mediation efforts in mitigating tensions and fostering peaceful coexistence between farming and herding communities.

The study conducted by Harshbarger reveals a significant pattern wherein herder behaviors, although influenced by ethnicity, converge in the manipulation of the land tenure system to gain access to or occupy farmlands adjacent to villages. This practice often involves chiefs and state officials leasing traditional farmlands and selling temporary usage rights to herders. The study highlights how the fluid and insecure nature of land tenure systems exacerbates conditions leading to conflicts between farmers and herders.

Through analysis of research findings and survey data from farmers, the study elucidates how individuals and groups from both the private and public sectors navigate the societal and state-driven economic, political, and legal domains. It becomes evident that these actors utilize farmer-herder dispute mediation not only to amass personal wealth through informal economic channels but also to exert control over local populations by manipulating state laws.

In light of these findings, the study proposes several recommendations to address the underlying issues contributing to farmer-herder conflicts. These include the establishment of a Farmer-Grazer Commission dedicated to conflict resolution, the promotion of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and a renewed focus on fostering state-society legitimacy. By implementing these

measures, the study suggests that stakeholders can work towards mitigating tensions and creating a more equitable and stable environment for all members of society.

Ahmadu's (2011) thesis, titled "Farmer-Herder Conflict: Exploring the Causes and Management Approaches in the Lake Chad Region Nigeria," adopts a political economy lens to examine the underlying factors contributing to farmer-herder conflict in Northeast Nigeria. Employing qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions, and non-participant observation, the study delves into the structural drivers of conflict and the management strategies employed in the region.

The research identifies several key economic and political factors fueling farmer-herder conflicts, including inadequate grazing reserves, farmers' encroachment on cattle routes, changes in land tenure systems, and insufficient legislation on pastoralism. Additionally, the expansion of agricultural policies and the impacts of climate change further exacerbate tensions between farmers and herders in the Lake Chad Basin. The study underscores the significance of the region's location and natural resources, which attract herders from neighboring countries due to the abundance of water and pasture.

Furthermore, Ahmadu's analysis highlights the role of the modern state in reshaping traditional norms and values within society, contributing to the breakdown of conflict resolution mechanisms. In response, the study recommends preventative measures and emphasizes the importance of good governance in addressing farmer-herder conflicts. Similarly, Agyemang (2017) employs a political economy framework in his empirical study titled "Farmer-Herder Conflict in Africa: An Assessment of the Causes and Effects of the Sedentary Farmers Fulani Herdsmen Conflict." Through qualitative research techniques such as interviews, Focus Group Discussions, observations, and document reviews, the study investigates the root causes and consequences of farmer-herder conflicts in the Agogo Traditional Area of the Ashanti region in Ghana.

Drawing on resource scarcity and eco-survivalism theoretical frameworks, Agyemang identifies climate change, population growth, crop destruction, water pollution, and cattle rustling as primary drivers of conflict between sedentary farmers and Fulani herders. The study underscores the multifaceted impacts of these conflicts, including loss of livelihoods, security threats, and humanitarian crises.

Amnesty International (2018), a prominent London-based global human rights organization, undertook an empirical study titled "Harvest of Death: Three Years of Bloody Clashes between Farmers and Herders in Nigeria" from 2016 to 2018. Recognizing the severity of the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria, the study aimed to comprehensively document and analyze the underlying causes, impacts, and responses to the violence.

Employing qualitative research methods, the study gathered data from eyewitnesses, victims, and community leaders across five states in Nigeria: Adamawa, Benue, Kaduna, Taraba, and Zamfara. Field trips were conducted to 56 communities, comprising 262 interviews, 230 document analyses,

and 556 audiovisual materials examinations. Additionally, remote phone interviews were conducted from the Plateau and Nasarawa States. The report's findings were alarming, revealing hundreds of deaths and widespread destruction of property across the affected states.

Furthermore, 22 out of Nigeria's 36 states were found to have experienced some form of farmer-herder conflict during the period under review. Of particular concern were the gross violations of human rights documented in the report, including sexual violence and population displacements. The clashes were attributed to scarcity and competition for vital resources such as land, water, and pasture, exacerbating tensions between herders and farmers.

Amnesty International's research also highlighted the inadequate response of the Federal Government of Nigeria and its security forces to address the escalating conflict. Responses were characterized as slow, weak, and poorly organized, failing to protect civilians or hold perpetrators accountable effectively. In Nébié (2018) thesis that covered a comprehensive case study research focused on the intricacies of farmer-herder livelihoods, challenges, and adaptations in the Center-South Region of Burkina Faso. Titled "Documenting Farmer-Herder Livelihoods, Challenges, and Adaptations in the Center-South Region of Burkina Faso," the thesis was divided into three distinct parts, each addressing a specific aspect of the overarching problem.

To collect data for his study, Nébié employed a range of qualitative research methods, including interviews, Focus Group Discussions, and ethnographic and spatial analysis utilizing remote sensing techniques. These methodologies enabled a nuanced understanding of the dynamics between farmers and herders in the region.

The first paper of the thesis examined the nature and root causes of farmer-herder conflicts, shedding light on the complex interplay of resource competition, political ecology, and climatic changes. The second paper delved into the evolving relationship between farmers and herders, particularly as both groups transitioned towards agro-pastoralism, highlighting areas of cooperation and mutual adaptation. Lastly, the third paper conducted within-group comparisons to elucidate variations in livelihood strategies and coping mechanisms among farmers and herders.

The findings of the study underscored the centrality of resource scarcity and environmental degradation in exacerbating farmer-herder conflicts. Moreover, the research revealed systemic challenges such as unequal access to decision-making processes, flaws in the land tenure system, and water pollution, which further compound existing tensions. One of the key conclusions drawn from Nébié's study was the mismatch between top-down policy approaches and local values and traditions. The disconnect between external interventions and the lived experiences of communities underscores the need for a more harmonized and contextually relevant approach to conflict resolution and policy implementation in the Center-Region of Burkina Faso. By integrating local knowledge and perspectives into policy frameworks, policymakers can foster more inclusive and effective strategies for addressing farmer-herder conflicts and promoting sustainable livelihoods in the region.

In his 2019 paper, "The Nigerian State and the Farmers-Herders Conflict: A Search for Peace in a Multi-ethnic Society," Genyi critically examined the persistent farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria, focusing particularly on the North-central or Middle-belt states. Through documentary analysis, Genyi elucidated the root causes and far-reaching consequences of these clashes on national security and the economy, tracing their trajectory since 2009.

A key focal point of Genyi's analysis is the exacerbation of the conflict by the push for herders' migrations from across West Africa into Nigeria's Savannah. This migration trend has been accentuated by the deteriorating environmental conditions in the Sahel, compounded by overgrazing practices. Furthermore, the adverse effects of climate change have profoundly altered once-fertile agricultural lands into vast deserts, prompting pastoralists to move southward in search of grazing pastures.

Genyi's paper underscores the systemic challenges inherent in Nigeria's federal arrangement, particularly regarding inter-group relations and the role of the state in conflict management. He lamented the failure of the Nigerian state to assert its relative autonomy and fulfill its primary obligation of providing security to its citizens' lives and property. This deficiency in governance has exposed the fragility and legitimacy of the Nigerian state, engendering suspicion of bias, weakness, and impartiality in conflict management.

In conclusion, Genyi's paper poignantly critiques the challenges facing the Nigerian state in addressing the farmers-herders conflict. It underscores the urgent need for comprehensive and proactive measures to enhance governance, foster inter-group relations, and restore public trust in state institutions. Only through concerted efforts to address these underlying issues can Nigeria effectively navigate the complexities of its multi-ethnic society and build a foundation for lasting peace and prosperity.

In their 2021 article, "Farmers versus Herders Conflict and its Implications on Nation-building in Nigeria: A Contribution to the Discourse," Sambo and Sule comprehensively examined the farmers-herders conflict within the broader context of national security concerns, nation-building, and national integration in Nigeria. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach to data collection and analysis, the study drew insights from secondary sources, which were discussed through thematic and analytical presentations.

One of the key assertions made by Sambo and Sule is that the conflict assumed a new dimension following the return to democracy, with certain politicians exploiting the tensions for personal and political gain. The politicization of the conflict, particularly during the transition of power from one political party to another in 2015, further exacerbated existing tensions and complexities.

In light of their findings, the study advocates for practical measures to address the root causes of the conflict and mitigate its adverse impacts. This includes the establishment of grazing reserves as a sustainable solution to managing livestock movement and reducing conflicts, as well as promoting dialogue and awareness-raising initiatives to foster mutual understanding and

cooperation between farmers and herders. Overall, Sambo and Sule's article contributes valuable insights to the discourse on the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria, emphasizing the urgent need for concerted efforts to address its underlying causes and promote peace, security, and national integration.

In their 2020 study titled "Nomadic Migration and Rural Violence in Nigeria: Interrogating the Conflict between Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers in Taraba State," Lenshie and Jacob delve into the complex relationship between Fulani herders and indigenous farmers in Taraba State. Employing a descriptive study approach, the researchers utilized document analysis, complemented by in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions, to gather and analyze data. The study unveils a historical backdrop of peaceful coexistence between indigenous Fulani herdsmen and their neighboring farmers in Taraba State. However, this harmony has been disrupted by the influx of migratory nomads, leading to violent confrontations fueled by competition over scarce resources such as water, grazing land, and other land resources.

Lenshie and Jacob's findings underscore the transformation of the conflict from a peaceful coexistence to a resource-based confrontation, particularly intensified in the post-2015 era in Nigeria. The ascendancy of Muhammadu Buhari to the presidency is cited as a significant factor, with the perceived lack of federal government intervention emboldening Fulani herdsmen to commit egregious crimes with impunity. In response to these challenges, the study advocates for the decentralization of security agencies and the establishment of state police forces. Empowering states with the authority and resources to combat crime and internal uprisings is seen as a potential solution to addressing the root causes of rural violence and promoting peace and stability in affected regions like Taraba State. Lenshie and Jacob's study sheds light on the intricate dynamics of the farmers-herders conflict in Taraba State and underscores the urgent need for proactive measures to mitigate tensions, protect communities, and facilitate peaceful coexistence between nomadic herders and indigenous farmers.

The Center for Democracy and Development (CDD) highlighted in 2021 the pervasive nature of the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria, emphasizing its constant evolution due to the actions and inaction of non-state actors. Their findings identified key root causes of the conflict, including transhumance, underage herding, and crop damage by livestock, and encroachment on grazing routes. Moreover, they identified various challenges hindering conflict resolution efforts, such as bias within security agencies, corruption among traditional rulers, identity politics, religious differences, and the proliferation of weapons.

On the other hand, the United Nations International Organization for Migration (UN-IOM) conducted a study focusing on the causes and implications of the farmer-herders conflict, specifically in Adamawa State from 2019 to 2022. Utilizing early warning and early response mechanisms, they received over 2,206 reports from 400 members in 51 communities within the state during this period. Additionally, the UN-IOM facilitated 11 policy dialogues, conducted 300

meetings, and organized 42 training sessions aimed at resolving the farmer-herders conflict. The overarching goal of their study was to contribute to sustainable natural resource management and climate change adaptation efforts in the region.

These two studies provide valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria, highlighting the diverse range of factors contributing to its perpetuation and the various approaches being employed to address it. By understanding the root causes and implications of the conflict and implementing targeted interventions, stakeholders can work towards promoting peace, stability, and sustainable development in affected communities.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis: Environmental Scarcity Theory

The study is anchored on Environmental Scarcity Theory (EST) which serves as the foundational framework for understanding the farmers-herders conflict as the independent variable. This theory posits that environmental factors, such as scarcity of resources like land, water, and pasture, play a significant role in exacerbating conflicts between farmers and herders.

The environmental scarcity theory pioneered by Homer-Dixon and the University of Toronto Group of Scholars, seeks to illuminate the linkages between environmental scarcity and various forms of conflict, including violence, ethnic tensions, and insurgencies, particularly in developing countries. Homer-Dixon (1991) predicts that within the next fifty years, the global population will likely surpass nine billion, accompanied by a quintupling of global economic output. Consequently, the scarcity of renewable resources is expected to intensify significantly.

The theory identifies three main sources of scarcity of renewable resources: environmental change, population growth, and unequal social distribution of resources. Environmental change, encompassing factors such as declining agricultural land, deforestation, depletion of water resources, and climate change, is highlighted as a critical driver of resource scarcity. Additionally, population growth exacerbates the strain on available resources, further intensifying competition and conflict over access.

Environmental scarcity is posited as a multifaceted concept encompassing not only physical resource depletion but also socio-economic disparities in resource distribution. The theory suggests that conflicts arising from environmental scarcity are likely to manifest as sub-national, persistent, and diffuse forms of violence. Importantly, impoverished societies are deemed particularly vulnerable to the impacts of environmental scarcities, as they lack the resources and resilience to mitigate the social crises precipitated by resource shortages.

Indeed, many societies, particularly in the developing world, are already grappling with acute hardship due to shortages of water, forests, and arable land. These scarcities fuel socio-economic tensions and exacerbate existing inequalities, laying the groundwork for conflicts that may escalate into violence.

The EST provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interplay between environmental dynamics, population pressures, and socio-economic disparities, as well as their role in shaping conflicts over scarce resources. By illuminating these linkages, the theory informs efforts to address the root causes of conflict and promote sustainable resource management practices that mitigate the risk of violence and foster peace and stability in vulnerable communities. Homer-Dixon's significant contribution lies in his innovative framework and terminology, which transcends conventional debates surrounding the interplay between population growth, resource scarcity, economic development, and conflict. He identifies three main positions within this discourse: the neo-Malthusian, who emphasize the constraints imposed by finite resources on growth and prosperity; the economic optimists, who posit minimal, if any, limitations on growth; and the distributionalist, who focus on the impact of wealth and power distributions on economic well-being rather than the finite stock of resources.

Central to Homer-Dixon's research approach is the integration of physical variables, such as natural resource stocks, population size and growth rates, and per capita resource consumption, with social factors like market dynamics and socio-economic structures. This integrated model emphasizes the significance of thresholds, interdependence, and interactions within complex environmental systems.

Homer-Dixon's studies have demonstrated that developing countries predominantly rely on environmental resources crucial for agricultural production, including forests, croplands, and freshwater. His research findings, drawn from projects conducted in countries such as China, Mexico, and numerous nations in sub-Saharan Africa, underscore the vital role of these resources in sustaining livelihoods and economic activities in developing regions.

By combining physical and social variables within a comprehensive analytical framework, Homer-Dixon's work offers valuable insights into the complex relationships between population dynamics, resource availability, and socio-economic development. His research contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors driving conflicts over scarce resources and informs strategies for sustainable resource management and conflict resolution in vulnerable regions worldwide.

Homer-Dixon's identification of six types of environmental change as potential drivers of violent intergroup conflicts underscores the complex relationship between environmental degradation and social unrest (Homer-Dixon, 1994). These include:

1. Greenhouse-induced climate change;
2. Stratospheric ozone depletion;
3. Degradation and loss of fertile agricultural land;
4. Deforestation;
5. Depletion and contamination of freshwater sources;
6. Depletion of fisheries.

In Nigeria, activities such as rosewood (Madrid) trading, bush burning, chemical-intensive farming, and the adoption of new technologies have significantly contributed to environmental degradation,

exacerbating land use and resource conflicts, particularly in the Northeast region, which has been heavily exploited for decades. The concept of environmental change leading to environmental scarcity aligns with Percival and Homer-Dixon's (1998) classification, which identifies three main types of environmental scarcity:

1. Supply-induced scarcity occurs when environmental resources are degraded or depleted, such as through soil erosion, leading to the loss of arable land;
2. Demand-induced scarcity: Arising from population growth or increased per capita consumption, which escalates the demand for resources;
3. Structural scarcity: Arising from unequal distribution of resources, whereby a few individuals or groups control a disproportionate share of resources, leaving the rest of the population facing shortages.

These forms of scarcity can exacerbate tensions and conflicts as competition for dwindling resources intensifies. In regions like Nigeria, where environmental degradation is acute, the consequences of environmental scarcity are particularly pronounced, further fueling social and economic instability.

Homer-Dixon's framework provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between environmental change, resource scarcity, and conflict. It highlights the urgent need for sustainable resource management and equitable distribution to mitigate the risk of social unrest and promote long-term stability.

Sub-Saharan Africa bears a disproportionate burden of environmental challenges despite its relatively low contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions. With more than two-thirds of its population engaged in agriculture, the region is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including variability in precipitation patterns, population growth, and reliance on outdated agricultural technologies. Countries like Nigeria and Mali exemplify this vulnerability, facing the dual challenges of drought and desertification exacerbated by climate change. These environmental stressors have led to violent conflicts in the northern regions of both countries, underscoring the link between environmental degradation and social unrest.

The concept of environmental scarcity is rooted in the availability or depletion of both renewable and non-renewable resources. Renewable resources such as freshwater, forests, and fertile soil are essential for sustaining livelihoods and ecosystems, while non-renewable resources like oil, iron ore, and minerals contribute to economic development.

The projections by the World Bank highlight the alarming potential impact of climate change-induced internal displacements in West Africa, underscoring the urgent need for sustainable climate action (Rigaud et al., 2018). The green war hypothesis posits that environmental degradation catalyzes poverty and conflict, as evidenced by scenarios where rising population pressures and declining agricultural productivity lead to land disputes and competition for scarce water resources (Homer-Dixon, 1994; Kaplan, 1994). This perspective aligns with the observations

of Homer-Dixon and Kaplan, who have emphasized the role of environmental scarcity in precipitating conflicts.

In Nigeria, the interplay of drought, desertification, and climate change has exacerbated ecological challenges, further straining resources such as land, water, and pasture. Historical instances of drought in 1914 and 1970, coupled with ongoing drought conditions since the 1990s, have heightened the pressure on available resources. The exponential population growth in the country has intensified this pressure, leading to supply-induced scarcity and contributing to the dynamics of the farmers-herders conflict (Mohammed et al., 2021).

Environmental scarcities, as delineated by Homer-Dixon and Blitt (1998), comprise three primary categories: supply-induced scarcity, demand-induced scarcity, and structural scarcity. Supply-induced scarcity involves the depletion and degradation of renewable resources to the point of irreversibility. In contrast, demand-induced scarcity arises from population growth outpacing the constant resource base, leading to unequal resource distribution. Structural scarcity, on the other hand, denotes the relative deprivation of one group compared to another in terms of resource access. These conditions can mutually reinforce each other exclusively, potentially giving rise to identity-based conflicts and conflicts of economic deprivation in affected countries (Chaturvedi & Doyle, 2010).

Consequently, the interplay of these environmental scarcities often results in two common patterns of interaction: "resource capture" and "ecological marginalization." Resource capture occurs when resource depletion and population growth lead to unequal access. At the same time, ecological marginalization arises from unequal access to resources and population growth, causing resource degradation and depletion (Homer-Dixon, 1991).

The argument surrounding environmental scarcity and conflict has garnered considerable attention from scholars. Westing compiled a list of twelve conflicts in the 19th century involving resources, where resource capture was a common theme. Examples include conflicts over the Senegal River and Mauritania, the Jordan River and the West Bank in Israel, and between Bangladesh and Pakistan, among others. These conflicts often arise from the push and pull factors within the environment.

Baechler (1998), in his work "Why Environmental Transformation Causes Violence," identifies five key situations that may precede violence: manipulation of the environment by dominant actors, disparate contexts, scarcity of regulatory means, formation of alliances with similar environmental problems, and spillover from historical conflicts.

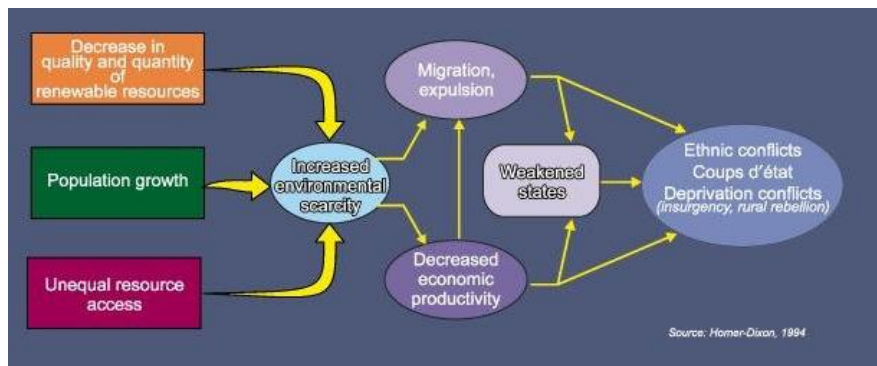This theoretical postulation by Homer-Dixon is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 2: Framework of Analysis of Environmental Scarcity Theory
Source: Homer-Dixon, 1994.

Empirical case studies worldwide have provided compelling evidence that environmental scarcity can instigate conflict both within and between nations. These findings support the eco-violence hypothesis regarding resource conflict. Populations in developing countries are already experiencing shortages of crucial resources such as arable land, water, forests, and fish. While the social impacts of climate change and ozone depletion may not be immediately apparent, they are likely to manifest in the coming decades. These atmospheric issues are expected to interact with existing resource, demographic, and economic pressures, gradually undermining the resilience of societies. Empirical data from various countries, including India, China, Lesotho, Mexico, Nicaragua, Egypt, Ethiopia, and South Africa, have underscored the link between resource conflict and environmental degradation, posing significant threats to development and human security (Homer-Dixon, 1991).
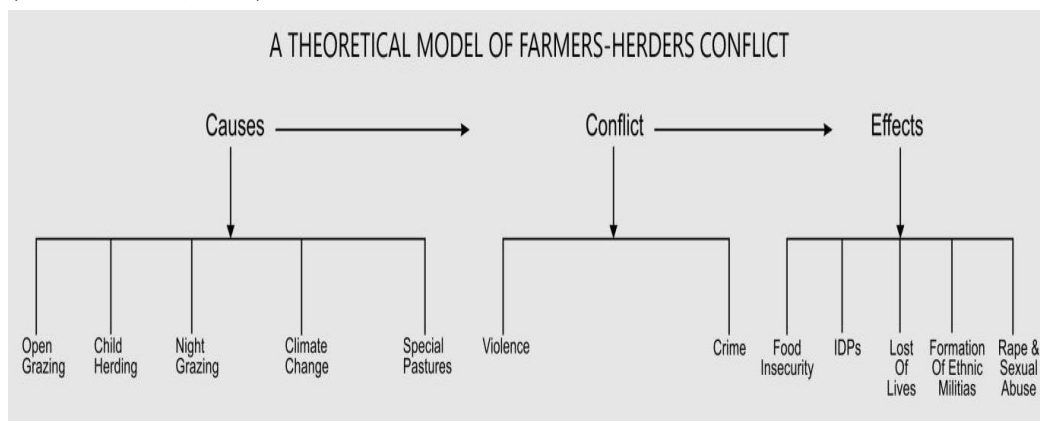

 Figure 3: A Theoretical Model of Farmers-Herders Conflict
Source: Author's Design, 2024.

Despite the shortcomings of the environmental scarcity theory rooted in environmental determinism, the theoretical framework of analysis presented in Figure 3 remains highly relevant

for this paper. Applying this theory involves considering the cause-and-effect relationships of environmental changes, population growth and migration, ethnic dynamics, and power structures. Factors such as climate change in Sub-Saharan Africa, the shrinking of the Lake Chad Basin, and the ethnic politics prevalent in the Northeast and Nigeria contribute to the current resource conflicts. Access, ownership, and scarcity of available resources, exacerbated by population growth and environmental degradation, serve as the primary drivers of the farmers-herders conflict in the Northeast and Nigeria. While this reality poses challenges, it also provides an environment conducive to the adoption of mitigation strategies to address the conflict. Figure 3 outlines a proposed model for resolving the conflict between farmers and herders in Northeast Nigeria.

Application of the Theory

The significance of this theory and its application to this study becomes apparent when considering the demographic changes in Nigeria. The country's landmass, which was 923,768 km2 at independence, now contends with a population of 226,184,946 million as of 2023 (Statista, 2024). This rapid population growth has placed immense pressure on the land and its finite resources, including freshwater, pasture, forest products, and fisheries. This surge in demand has led to scarcity driven by population growth, sparking competition and, in some cases, violence.

Homer-Dixon's framework, which explores the causal relationship between environmental change and resource conflict (eco-violence), offers valuable insights into the dynamics of the farmers-herders conflict in Northeast Nigeria and beyond. The three key factors identified—environmental change, population growth and migration, and unequal resource distribution—align with the evidence and situational analysis of the conflict (Homer-Dixon, 1999, p. 16).

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

The farmers-herders conflict has devastating effects on peace, security, livelihoods and development of the people in the entire Northeast Nigeria. These effects and impacts varies in dimensions and frequencies in the affected states of Adamawa, Gombe, and Taraba (AGT States). The data collected from AGT States from diverse participants; farmers, herders, police, ICRC Staff, NEMA/SEMA, CSOs, journalists and lecturers were presented below.

Table 1: Summary of Major Causes and Impact of Farmers-Herders Conflict AGT States

S/N	ITEM	Manifestations	Responses%
1	Cattle tress pass into farms causes farmer-herders conflict to be very wide spread and frequent	Most cases of farmers-herders conflict were linked to eating or destruction of crops by cattle	168
2	Having farms on cattle routes causes farmers-herders conflict	The reasons adduced to tress pass were aligned to farming on cattle routes	160
3	Population displacements due to farmers-herders conflict creates human security problems	Visible human security problems were caused by population displacements	122
4	Loss of human lives is a major human security problem	Violence and loss of human lives were major human security problems	146
5	Farmers-herders conflict prevents people from going to their farms	Fear of attacks and ambush prevent farmers from farming	121

6	Farmers-herders conflict directly affects food prices	Inability to produce food directly push prices of farm produce	120
7	Federal Government responded by deploying security forces to address farmers-herders conflict	Kinetic approach by Federal Government does very little to prevent conflict	130
8	State Governments responded by Enactment of Anti-Open Grazing Law	Very few states responded to farmers-herders conflict by enacting Anti-Open Grazing Law	64

Source: FGD Field Survey, 2023

The above data presented was a summary of the themes identified in 18 FGD held in 6 LGAs each of the 3 States with 10 persons each which cumulatively represent 180 participants. From the data elicited, tress pass by cattle into farm fields to eat or destroy crops accounted for 168 responses representing 93% of participants who agreed that it is one of the causes of farmer-herder conflict. Having farms cultivated on cattle routes serves as another major causes of the conflict with 160 responses representing 88% of participants that agreed. Moreso, loss of human lives have been identified as one of the major effects of the conflict on human security with 146 responses representing 81% of participants who agreed with the item

Similarly, population displacements as a result of farmers-herders conflict have been identified as another effect on human security with 122 responses representing 67% of participants who agreed. When respondents were asked if loss of human lives is a major human security problem, violence and loss of human lives were major human security problems, the responses indicate that 146 representing 81% agreed to this assertion. This is followed by the assertion that farmers-herders conflict prevent people from going to their farms 121 responses representing 67% of participants who agreed.

The participants believes that farmers-herders conflict directly affect food prices in the markets. The responses120 representing 66% of participants. In the same vein, participants agreed that Federal Government kinetic approach to farmers-herders conflict failed to address the spread of the violence with 130 responses representing 72% of the participants. Finally, participants agreed that the enactment of Anti-Open Grazing Law does not prevent or will not solve the farmers-herders conflict 64 responses representing 35% as the item with less agreement among the participants.

Table 2: Police Reports on Farmers-Herders

S/N	State	Reported cases	Deaths	Police killed
1	Adamawa	41	54	7
2	Gombe	80	35	1
3	Taraba	5	8	4

Conflict in AGT States 2016-2023

Source: Police Reports, AGT States, 2023.

From the above table, Adamawa State has the highest number of deaths (54), followed by Gombe State (35), while Taraba State has 8. Taraba state has the least number because the report only

captured 2023. The report also indicates that Gombe State has the highest number (80) of reported cases, followed by Adamawa State with 41 reported cases. In contrast, Taraba State has the lowest number of reported cases with 5. It has also revealed that Adamawa State has the highest number of police personnel killed (7) from the farmers-herders conflict, followed by Taraba State (4). In contrast, Gombe State has the least, with 1 officer killed on duty.

Table 2: IDP Camps Location for Farmers-Herders Conflict in AGT States 2016-2023

S/N	State (s)	Number of IDP Camp	Location of IDP Camp	Year
1	Adamawa	7	Demsa Primary School, Dong Primary School, Girei Central Primary School, Lamorde Primary School, Mubi Central Primary School, Tudun Wada and Wuro Mallam Isa.	2016-23
2	Gombe	4	Balanga Primary School, Bambam Central Primary School, Billiri Central Primary School, and Yemaltu-deba Central Mosque	(2016).-23
3	Taraba	8	Bali Central Primary School, Chanchangi Primary School, Jimlari Camp, Lau Central Primary School, Sunkani Primary School,St. Mary Primary School Wukari, Wukari East Primary School, and Wukari Rest House	2016-23

Source: Field Work in AGT States (2023).

The above table 2 indicates that Taraba State has the highest number of IDPs with 8 in temporary camps followed by Adamawa with 7 camps and lastly Gombe with 4 camps respectively. The implications of this is that the displaced populations suffers from fear, want and indignity. The interventions of the three tiers of government was not enough and usually comes very late. However, the victims have demonstrated strong reliance by providing for themselves and resettling with relatives to avoid IDPs camps life of insecurity.

Discussion of Findings

The farmers-herders conflict has significantly complicated the Nigerian security dynamics over the years, leading to bloody clashes, especially in the Northeastern states of Adamawa, Gombe, and Taraba. Fieldwork findings indicate that the primary precipitating cause of these clashes is the traditional open grazing system, where herders trespass into farmlands to eat or destroy crops. This finding aligns with previous studies by Amnesty International (2017, 2018), Shettima and Tar (2008), Blench (2004), Ahmadu (2011), and Lenshie and Kondu (2020).However, the problems of access to water, pastures and control of land have been the recurring problems.

Police reports from Adamawa, Gombe, and Taraba States (2016-2023) indicate that Adamawa had the highest number of deaths (54), Gombe had the highest number of reported cases (80), and Taraba had the least, though the report only covered 2023. A government committee of inquiry by

the Taraba State Government (2017) reported 297 deaths, while Adamawa State (2023) reported 305 deaths due to the farmers-herders conflict.

The findings from the fieldwork align with state government committees of inquiry on the causes, effects, and impacts of the farmers-herders conflict on food and human security. Additional findings from focus group discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews (KII) include issues like child-herding, night grazing, kidnapping for ransom, search for special pasture, land allocation, and sexual exploitation and abuse.

Conclusion and Recomendations

This paper examined the farmers-herders conflict and its implications for human security and food security in Northeast Nigeria 2016 to 2023. This period was chosen due to the resurgence of the conflict during these years. The paper aimed to provide empirical insights into the dynamics of this persistent issue and its effects on human security, national security, and development in Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to: identify the causes of the farmers-herders, effects of this conflict and analyze its impact of human and food security,

The study revealed that the FHC is primarily a resource-based conflict exacerbated by factors such as environmental degradation, climate change, population pressures, identity politics, and socio-economic dynamics. It identified the conflict as a Low-Intensity Conflict. The root causes of the FHC were categorized into remote and immediate factors. Remote causes included competition over land ownership, climate and environmental changes like drought, encroachment into grazing reserves by farmers, Boko Haram insurgency, the ECOWAS Protocol of 1998 on free movement, and the state's failure to respond to early warning signs. Immediate causes encompassed open grazing systems, trespassing into farms, lack of access to water, pasture, and forests, rumor-mongering, population growth, and provocative rhetoric such as "Fulani bandits" and "'Yan Kabila" being weaponized by media, affecting inter-group relations.

Successive governments' failure to establish new cattle routes or harmonize existing ones resulted in controversy. The Northern Nigerian Regional Government's National Grazing Reserves Law of 1965, which established 415 cattle routes (141 gazetted in 21 States, mostly in Northern Nigeria except for Ogun and Oyo in the Southwest), needed to be revised. The Land Use Act of 1978 shifted power to the center and state governors, politicizing efforts to establish cattle colonies and the RUGA policy in 2018 and 2019.

The study concluded that the farmers-herders conflict in Northeast Nigeria and beyond stemmed from the failure of successive government policies on cattle routes, land use and ownership, water, and other agricultural resources. These policies have become sources of competition and conflict due to urbanization, population growth, and environmental changes. Nations are encouraged to now explore water diplomacy as another measure of curtailing the farmers-herders conflict.

The paper recommends that the government establish grazing reserves and ranches, initiate multi-stakeholder dialogues, introduce nomadic seasonal migration calendars, and implement alternative dispute resolution mechanisms through a bottom-up approach. This aligns with the Anti-Open Grazing Law enacted by the Taraba State Government (2017). The Transhumance Tracking Tool initiated by some NGOs has proven effective in early warning and response in Northeast Nigeria.

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