



SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF FARMERS AND HERDSMEN CONFLICT ON HOUSEHOLDS IN TAKUM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study assessed the socio-economic implications of farmers and herdsmen conflicts on household in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State. A total of one hundred and thirty three (133) respondents (farmers, herdsmen, traders, community leaders and local government officials) were selected through purposive and simple random sampling methods respectively. A self-developed instrument titled "Socio-Economic Implication of Farmers and Herdsmen Conflict on Household (SETHCH)" was used for data collection. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used in the analysis of data. The findings of the study revealed social implication of conflict as brought insecurity and threat of life and property, unity and bonds that existed between families of farmers and herdsmen has been disrupted as families and communities members find it difficult to unite and hold meetings. Herdsmen and farmers experience family and marriage breakdown due to conflicts. The study also revealed economic implication of these conflicts to include youth lost of farming and rearing employment, massive migration of families, customers/visitors relocating business to safe places, prices of farm produce and meat went high. The findings on the conflict resolution strategies suggested, that teaching through religious bodies, government mediation through peaceful dialogue and deployment of more security agent to the area. The study concludes that urgent measures like implementation of land use policy to address land use in the study area be adopted by the government. Local government officials and other stakeholders involved in conflict management to create more awareness on the importance of peaceful co-existence and respect of human rights and properties. From the findings of the research, the following recommendations were made: government adoption of new conflict resolution strategies such as implementation of land use policy, dialogue between farmers and herders and proper awareness/orientation by educating communities on the importance of peaceful co-existence and respect to human rights and properties. These can be achieved through religious institutions in the area. To this end, socio-economic development in the study will be possible.

Keywords: Socio-Economic, Conflict, Household, implication, Herders, Farmers.



Introduction

Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State is one of the places in North central where farmers and herders' conflicts are common especially during farming seasons (March – Nov.). The area is mostly rural and farming and cattle rearing is the main source of income for the dwellers. The herdsman in the area rear cattle while farmers grow crops such as cereals (Corn, Millet, Sorghum), yams, cassava, beans and vegetables.

In the past, farmers and herders lived peacefully and even support each other's livelihood but in recent years, there have been recurrent clashes between farmers and herders in this area. These incidents usually occur due to both groups now compete for the same limited available resources to make a living such as land, water and grazing areas. Limited natural resources, population growth, climate change has made this competition worse in recent years (Ajibefun, 2018). These conflicts that are disagreements/disputes have led to communication breakdowns, personality clashes or differing expectations among community members. The implications of this recurrent conflicts are wide and damaging as it affects social and economic development such as displacement of people from ancestral homes, psychological trauma, women and girls' vulnerability to social and economic predation, huge economic burden on both federal and state government, reduced level of productive activities (Muazu Bukar Ali, 2024). In line with this, the study of Rukwe, Abdullahi, Faruk and Nwaeze (2019) highlighted perceived causes of these conflicts to include: cultural differences, disregard to traditional authorities, population growth, non-compliance with land use policies. Recurrent incidence of conflicts affects households under attack as they lose crops, cattle and other valuable items and sometimes households were forced to alternative home environment such as IDP camps. According to Adisa and Adekunle (2020), such conflicts result in economic hardship, reduce food production that increases hunger and poverty among the people. Farmers and Herders are likely to experience consequences such as decrease in output and income, loss of crops on the field store, as household will be exposed to challenging life situations like loss of lives and injuries sustained, reduction in household resources, increase number of widows, widowers and orphan, declining quality of children's education, teenage pregnancy, misbehaving and uncontrollable conduct of youth, and marital dissatisfaction (Rukwe et al, 2019). Socially, conflicts affect co-peaceful existence and bonds between herders and farmers, cause forced migration of people from rural areas to urban cities and leaving the area underdeveloped.

According to Adebayo (2008), conflicts in an area discourage investment in both agriculture and other industrial activities, slow down rural infrastructural development such as roads, schools, markets and hospitals and increase youth unemployment with other poor living conditions. Olanrewaju and Balana (2023), highlighted issues that may lead to conflicts between farmers and herders in north central geopolitical zone in Nigeria such as lack of well managed grazing lands, weak system of conflict resolutions, poor land use policies and others. Khalid and Mohammed (2023), revealed the causes and effects of farmers-Herders clashes in Taraba State, Nigeria and stated factors responsible for the causes of the clashes/conflicts in the study area to include land encroachment on cattle routes, crop damage by cattle, inadequate grazing reserves, lack of access to water and indiscriminate bush burning. The study further



revealed that avoidance of these causative factors will enhance cordial relationship between farmers and herdsmen and reduce conflict in future in the study area. This review are an evident that Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State needs empowerment to tackle conflict with various conflict resolution strategies that will bring lasting solutions to bridge gaps in persistent conflicts that effects socio-economic development of the area which in reverse affects household survival.

This study, therefore aimed to examine the socio-economic implication of the farmers and herdsmen conflicts on households in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State by considering conflict implications on economic and social well-being of dwellers in the study area. The finding of the study provides useful information to Takum indigenes, state government, security agencies and all stakeholders involve in peace and conflict resolutions in the community, state, federal and international organisations.

Statement of the Problem

Conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria have become one of the biggest obstacles to family well-being and socio-economic development of the area. One of the most critical implication of the persistent conflict is its disruption on fundamental household system, destruction of farmlands, crops and animals, these have led to displacement, low food production, hunger and rising food prices that has created serious challenge in food insecurity and youth unemployment. When farmers lose harvest and herdsmen lose cattle, households are left with little or nothing for survival. Local trade and market activities suffers as roads leading to such area were block, sometimes goods coming out of such place are being burnt and traders are scared of transacting business in such a crisis region.

Although, both government and community leaders have made efforts to restore peace but without effective policies addressing the causes of these persistent clashes, households in the study area will continue to suffer from income lost and social consequences of these conflicts. Therefore, it is important to examine the socio-economic implication of these conflicts in line with the strategies for conflict resolutions that will bring lasting solutions to recent problems. The findings will suggest solutions that can promote peace, restore livelihoods and support sustainable development in the study area.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to assess the socio-economic implication of farmers and Herdsmen conflicts on households in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State.

Specific Objectives

1. Examine the social implication of farmers and herdsmen conflict on households of Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State.
2. Examine the economic implication of farmers and herdsmen conflict on households in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State.



3. Identify the conflict resolution strategies employed in mitigating conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State.

Methodology

Study design: A descriptive survey research design was used to achieve the specific objectives set for the study. This design was suitable for the study because descriptive data makes it possible to use questionnaire to obtain relevant information directly from farmers, traders, herdsmen and community members and local government officials on the socio-economic implication of farmers and herdsmen conflict on households in Takum. Information gathered from these groups can be used to generalized communities and local government in North central with similar characteristics.

Population of the study: the population for this study were farmers (80,000), herdsmen (25,000), traders (15,000), community leaders (500), local government officials (300) making an estimated population of 120,800 (estimates based on NPC, 2006 census projections at 2.8% growth rate, NBS, 2022).

Sample size and sampling Techniques. A sample of one hundred and thirty-three (133) respondents were selected using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was employed to select respondents who have direct experience of the conflicts while simple random sampling was used to give each respondents an equal chance of being selected.

Method of Data Collection: The instrument used for data collection was a self-developed structure questionnaire title Socio-Economic Implication of Farmers and Herdsmen Conflict (SEIFHC). The questionnaire captured items needed to generate responses on the objectives of the study. To ensure validity, a pilot test was conducted in Benue state which was the nearest state with the same characteristics on the issues under investigation. A reliability test was also carried out using Cronbach alpha method. A correlation coefficient of 0.70 was realized meaning that the instrument was good enough to carry out the study. The instrument were administered and retrieve on the spot. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation.

Results

Table 1: Responses of Respondents on social implications of Farmers and Herders conflicts in takum local government Area of Taraba State.

S/NO	ITEMS	Mean	Standard deviation	Decision
1.	Herders and farmers still maintain love and care after conflicts in Takum Local Government Area.	2.68	1.29	Rejected
2.	Unity and bonds that existed among families and communities have been disrupted as members finds it difficult to unit and hold meetings.	3.44	1.23	Accepted
3.	Persistence conflicts has led to violation of human rights in Takum example rapes, human trafficking, child labour and abandonment.	2.65	1.16	Rejected
4.	Herders and farmers conflicts in Takum promoted social vices such as killing, stealing, kidnapping and burglary.	3.00	1.41	Accepted
5.	Dialogue will bridge conflict and bring solution to conflicts between herders and farmers in Takum.	3.33	1.33	Accepted
6.	Herders and farmers families experience marriage breakdown due to conflicts in the area.	3.28	1.28	Accepted
7.	Human movement into Takum communities to be restricted.	3.18	1.36	Accepted
8.	Conflict brought insecurity and threat of life and property in Takum.	3.62	1.38	Accepted
9.	Takum families experience breakdown in family structure due to persistence conflict.	3.03	1.21	Accepted
10.	Parents finds it uneasy in child training and discipline.	3.16	1.27	Accepted
Grand mean		3.14	1.29	Accepted

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agreed, MA = Mildly Agreed, D = Disagreed
ad SD = Strongly Disagreed.

The findings on table 1 highlights the social implications of farmers and herdsman conflicts on households in Takum, directly addressing objective 1.

The findings revealed that conflicts have brought insecurity and threats of life and property (3.62), Unity and bonds that existed among families and communities have been disrupted due to persistent conflicts (3.44) respectively. Items such as farmers and Herdsmen maintain love and care after conflicts was rejected (2.68).

Table 2: Responses of Respondents on Economic Implications of Farmers and Herders Conflicts in Takum local government Area of Taraba state

S/NO	ITEMS	Mean	Standard deviation	Decision
1.	Prices of farm produce and meat went high due to conflict between herders and farmers.	3.36	1.38	Accepted
2.	Takum youths lost employment in farming and rearing activities.	3.62	1.26	Accepted
3.	Poverty and lack experience in Takum is due to persistent conflicts.	2.92	1.45	Rejected
4.	Conflicts in Takum led to massive migration of families to other Local Government Area.	3.47	1.44	Accepted
5.	Conflicts between herders and farmers hinder infrastructural development in Takum communities such as School(s), Markets, Hospitals etc.	3.22	1.35	Accepted
6.	Costumers/visitors relocate business to other areas because of conflicts.	3.73	1.24	Accepted
7.	Takum indigence experience hunger due to loss of farmlands, crops and animals during conflicts.	3.00	1.47	Accepted
Grand mean		3.32	1.37	Accepted

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agreed, MA = Mildly Agreed, D = Disagreed and SD = Strongly Disagreed.

The findings on table 2 explain the results on economic implications of farmers and herdsman conflicts on households in Takum. The findings revealed that Takum youths lost employment on farming and rearing activities (3.62), Persistent conflicts led to massive migration of families to another local government area (3.47), also customers and visitors relocate businesses to other safe areas (3.73) respectively.

Table 3: Responses of Respondents on Conflict Resolutions Strategies Adopted in Mitigating Conflicts between Farmers and Herders in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State.

S/NO	ITEMS	Mean	Standard deviation	Decision
1.	Takum youths observed that the best solution is to fight back attackers.	2.47	1.26	Rejected
2.	Residents need state government dialogue between herders and farmers.	3.42	1.32	Accepted
3.	Communities/households prefer intervention from religious leaders through bible/Koran preaching.	3.62	1.25	Accepted
4.	Allowing the use of weapons may be the best solution to bring peace between farmers and herders.	2.77	1.38	Rejected
5.	Security agents deployed by the government have been so helpful in combating conflicts between farmers and herders.	3.02	1.22	Accepted
Grand mean		3.06	1.29	Accepted

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agreed, MA = Mildly Agreed, D = Disagreed and SD = Strongly Disagreed.



Findings on table 3 revealed significant strategies to mitigate conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in Takum. The result shows that communities and households prefer intervention through religious leaders through bible and koran preaching (3.62), also residents needs state government dialogue had a mean score of (3.42), while item such as allowing the use of weapon was underscore with a mean value below criterion mean (2.77), respectively.

Discussions

Results on social implications of farmers and Herdsmen conflict on households in the study area as shown in Table 1 reveals that majority of the respondents agrees on the items raised on social implications of conflicts on households in Takum, example unity and bonds between farmers and herdsmen has been disrupted due to persistent conflict. This result is in line with the study of Rukwe, Adbullahi, Faruk and Nwaeze (2019) who noted similar issues as effects of farmers – Herders conflict on farming households in southern Taraba State, Nigeria. They findings concluded that farmer's/ Herders conflicts are destructive and have far reaching consequences on farming household livelihood assets as well as rural development in Taraba state Nigeria if left unchecked.

The result on economic implication of farmers and herdsmen conflicts on households indicates that 70% of the respondents agrees on issues such as youths lost employment in farming and rearing activities due to persistent conflict in the study area. Customers and visitors left the area, massive migration of families to safe local government areas, indigenes experience hunger due to loss of farmlands. The findings agree with the study of Muazu bukar (2024) on impact of Farmers-Herders conflict in the socio-economic development of Nigeria. The study noted that conflicts brings food insecurity, rising inflation and impact on climate change which continues to derive hunger in Nigeria with 26.5 million people across the country projected to face acute food hunger in future. According to the findings of the GRFE, (2023), ending hunger by 2030 is ever more challenging as the population facing high level of acute food insecurity continue to increase on daily basis. In line with this, Solomon (2021) stated that the degree to which farmer-herder's conflicts existed in Taraba State will affect food production, availability, stability and consumption. Nnaji et al (2022) highlighted that to achieve sustainable economic development, policy intervention be made to alleviate concurrent conflicts between farmers and Heders in farming areas in Nigeria.

The result on table 3 indicates conflict resolutions strategies to mitigate conflict between farmers and herders. The findings of the study show that majority of the respondents pointed strategies such as religions teaching, deployment of more security agents, dialogue between farmers and herdsmen, awareness creation on peace and co-existence as way to combat conflict in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State and rejected the use of weapon. This finding agrees with the study of Muazu (2024) on measures employed by successive governments in tackling the issues of farmer's herders conflicts in Nigeria. The study reported that any farmer or herder found with weapon will be charged with terrorism.



Conclusion/Recommendations

The study concludes that conflict in rural farming areas have implication in the agricultural sector and household survival. Resolving re-occurring conflicts between farmer and herdsmen will improve food security and reduce social vices that affect households. However, the study recommends government adoption of new conflict resolution strategies such as implementation of land use policy, dialogue between farmers and herders, religious leaders intervention through proper preaching and awareness/orientation campaigns educating communities on the important of peaceful co-existence and respect to human rights and properties.



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