

Causes behind Conflicts between Herders and Farmers in Nigeria,  
and Perceived Efficiency of Institutions in Managing the Conflicts

Master's Thesis in  
Peace, Mediation and Conflict Research  
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## Abstract

**Aim:** The aim of the study was to investigate perceived causes behind conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria, and perceived efficiency of institutions in managing the said conflicts.

**Method:** A questionnaire was completed by 200 respondents (87 women, 113 men) in Nigeria. The mean age was 33.3 years ( $SD = 9.7$ ) for women, and 37.9 ( $SD = 13.0$ ) for men. The respondents belonged to three ethnic groups: Hausa 29 %, Igbo 46 %, and Yoruba 25 %. A questionnaire was constructed for the study.

**Results:** Crops damaged by cattle, land encroachment, and the killing of stray cattle were the main perceived reasons behind conflicts between herders and farmers. No significant differences were found between opinions of herders, farmers, traders, or teachers. The Yoruba scored higher than the other groups on perceived causes behind the conflicts, with one exception. The Hausa scored highest on the land use policy that vested control of land to government authorities as a cause behind conflicts. The traditional rulers were considered the most efficient in managing conflicts, followed by local governmental committees, courts, and the police. No significant differences were found regarding the perceived efficiency of the institutions between responses of herders, farmers, traders, or teachers.

**Conclusions:** The results indicate that the prevailing clashes between farmers and herdsmen in many parts of Nigeria have been attributed to the destruction of farmlands by cattle, which are mostly owned by the herdsmen.

*Key Words:* perceived causes behind conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria, perceived efficiency of institutions in managing the conflicts, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Aim of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the main perceived reasons behind conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria as well as differences in opinions of herders, farmers, traders, and teachers regarding reasons behind the said conflicts. Differences in opinions regarding causes behind the conflicts perceived by three ethnic groups (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba) were also investigated. Furthermore, the study includes results on differences in opinions of herders, farmers, traders, and teachers on which institutions were considered the most efficient in managing the conflicts between herders and farmers.

## 1.2 Background

According to (Abbas, 2015) peace is viewed by researchers from logical, sociological, partisan, commercial and spiritual, viewpoints, among others. The (UN Secretary-General, 2013) regarded peace as one of the necessities required for the development of any society and that the absence of peace weakens the society.

According to Miller and King (2003), peace is presence of an atmosphere that ensures justice through official and informal institutions, as well as in practice. However, the absence of war does not mean the presence of peace. In the same way, avoiding conflicts does not mean the presence of peace. To ensure peace there are fundamental required steps or conditions in any given society and sustainable development has been seen as essential for sustainable peace. According to (Sachs, 2007) minimizing the risk of war can only be possible and attainable if the wealthy nations of the world help impoverished people everywhere to meet their basic needs and protect their natural environments.

In this scenario, however, there cannot be development without peace and peace is essential for Nigeria, a country where the conflict between farmers and herders has led to the disruption of peace and the loss of lives and properties. The conflict has been attributed or linked to so many reasons such as population growth, climate change amid shrinking land resources.

At independence in 1960 the population of Nigeria was estimated at 45.1 million according to (Trading Economics, 2021), years down the line the total population of Nigeria was estimated at

206.14 million in 2020, according to projections from Trading Economics. The average population growth rate is 2.6 percent annually. According to (FMARD, 2017) as cited by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Nigeria has over 70.8 million hectares of agriculture land area where major crops are been cultivated. Regrettably animal production has not been fully taken advantage. Livestock raised by farmers in Nigeria include goats, sheep, and cattle. Interestingly, the northern part of the country is conducive for any kind of livestock keeping. It is a statement of fact that Nigeria's agricultural sector contributes significantly to the country's GDP. However, from July and September 2021, agriculture added about 30 percent of the total GDP. Agriculture is the main activity that drives the economy of Nigeria in addition to crude oil. Agricultural activities provide means of livelihood for teaming population of Nigerians, but regrettably the wealth accrued from oil are managed by a few privileged elite (Statista.com, 2022). It is estimated that from the periods of 2013 and 2019 the nation's GDP of 24% was from the agriculture sector. . It is also important to note that the sector also employs more than 36% of the country's labour force, and making the sector the largest employer in the country according to (Oyaniran, 2021).

In Nigeria the livestock population is estimated to rise considerably between 2009 and 2050. For example, it is projected that the poultry population could grow from 209.6 million to almost 1.4 billion heads, accounting a growth of over 500 percent. The increase demand for livestock products is projected to grow at yearly rate by over three percent (Sasu, 2022). Regrettably, this positive development projection may not likely materialize when the livestock sector is continually under risk of violence, with killings by herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. Before now the crop farmers and the herders have been having a cordial relationship without much conflicts and where there are little skirmish between the two groups, there were means to settle it between the two groups. Nevertheless, due to population explosion in Nigeria, the available land resources for crop farming and pasture have continue to shrink. This problem has also been attributed or linked to other reasons

According to (Abdullahi et al., 2017) one of the major problems facing the Nigeria is the loss of forest been experience in almost part of the country especially in the Northern part of the Nigeria. A part from the forest loss climate change is a major ecological problem challenge confronting man and his environment. This climate change is a serious menace to agricultural system and food security in many developing countries of the world including Nigeria. (Azare et al., 2020). It has diverse effect on production factors such as soil's moistness and soil richness and

this in turn affects farming outputs and also on food security. (Josephine and Amaechi, 2014) have observed that securing food security of any nation is a function on the stability and sustainability of enough food from the agricultural sector. Nigeria's climate condition has been changing which could be attributed to increases in temperature; and biodiversity (Elisha et al., 2017; Ebele & Emodi, 2016; Olaniyi et al., 2013). The period and strong point of rainfall have greater than before, creating huge runoffs and overflowing in various places in Nigeria (Enete, 2014).

However, rainfall disparity is anticipated to continue to rise. Rainfall in southern part of Nigeria has been anticipated to increase and escalating sea levels are also projected to aggravate flooding and submersion of sea side lands (Akande et al., 2017; Ebele & Emodi, 2016). The issue of droughts have always been a problem in Nigeria, and research has shown that it will continue especially in the Northern part of Nigeria, rising from a drop in rainfall and increase in temperature (Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Olapido, 2010). From all indications Lake Chad and other lakes in the country are also at threat of disappearing (Dioha & Emodi, 2018; Elisha et al., 2017). This condition has caused rise in temperature since the 1980s (Enete, 2014; Federal Ministry of Environment, 2014). Climate forecasts disclose increase in temperature in all the ecological zones (Akande et al., 2017). It is important to note that climate change caused decrease in livestock production. Naturally livestock animals largely feed on grass to grow, and when they do not feed very well it will affect their yield. Harsh climatic conditions affects the pastures these animals feed on to yield very well. From economical perspective climate change has decreased income generation from both farming and livestock for nation and individual respectively. By extension climate change has effect on both established farmers and nomadic herders. This situation has inadvertently and invariably promoted a cause for conflict between herders and the farmers.

From the time immemorial herdsmen in Nigeria are known to engage in a kind of transhumance. This means the herdsmen and their herds always moved according to seasonal changes in the quality of grazing or to exploit seasonal availability of pasture (Lawal-Adebowale, 2012).

Conversely, the population explosion witness in recent time coupled with infrastructural development in the urban cities have resulted in many of the grazing routes taken over. These expansionist tendencies by human beings are some of the reasons for the constant conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria.

### 1.3 The History of Herdsmen-Farmers Conflicts in Nigeria

According to (Davidheiser and Luna, 2008) farmers and herdsmen have lived over the times across West Africa Sub region peacefully, notwithstanding the crises they are experiencing at the moment. The mutual rapport had been nonviolent pleasant and harmonizing. It have been complementary in the sense that the herdsmen have over the years depended on vegetation from farmers for their cattle and staple food while farmers in turn depend on excrement from the herdsmen for their farms, and meat and dairy products from cattle. This equally helpful correlation had been the trademarks of their allocation of land, water, fodder and other resources (Shettima & Tar 2008).

(Adebayo 1991) has also noted that the healthy competition existed between the farmers and herders from the periods of the 12 and 13th Centuries had no detailed cases of violence or killings between the farmers and herders. The collaboration between both groups was mutual where farmers and herders had a stake interest in the welfare of each group (Davidheiser & Luna, 1996). There was a communal arrangement called Ruga, instituted by some Fulani elites before the advent of the British colonial rulers to safe guide the peace between farmers and herders. The Ruga was meant to oversee grazing activities and map out grazing areas and nomadic routes. This Ruga official is charged with the duties of conflict resolution between herdsmen and crop farmers (Ellwood, 1995).

The colonial era altered and changed both existed social and physical structure that negates the principles of cooperation between herdsmen and farmers in the Northern parts of Nigeria. The change in the existing understanding affected the herders and farmers mutual cooperation and weakened the informal traditional land tenure system and resource use procedure that was in use. Take for example, the colonial authorities introduced a new system of conflict management system odd to the natives and which regrettably did not work. Tactically, the colonial leaders enacted edicts concerning land possession which gave large portion of the land to their Europeans allies through the system of privatization (Davidheiser & Luna, 1996).

This system of privatization diminished local peoples and herders' influence and access to land, in that way creating the resource scarce and increasing ecological degradation. The colonial era also established medical treatment centers for cattle. These treatment centers for cattle helped in reduction on the effect of animal infections and in turn encouraged migration of herders to southern part of Nigeria (Blench, 2010).

The conflicts between farmers and herdsmen got deteriorated due to population increase and human development needs coupled with the collapse of the Ruga system. Another contributing factors are the natural factors like climate change. For instance, as noted by (Galaty, 1994; Davidheister and Luna, 1996) the major drop in normal rain in Africa's arid and semi-arid zone since the 1970's had been linked with changes in land tenure system and local methods of agricultural production.

The current system is surrounded with a lot of violent conflict between herdsmen and farmers. One remarkable early occurrence of conflict reported in (Williams, 1991) happened in the early 1990's at Muri, in Taraba State where local people begrudged about the allocation of land for large scale ranches in their community.

In 1989, it was reported cases of violent clashes between herders and farmers in different parts of the country (Adebayo, 1991). The conflict was alleged to have had a kind of ethnic cum religious undertone supposedly influenced by the ethno-religious struggles that precede the colonial period, but the relative absence of such pervasive clash throughout Nigeria's pre-independence history recommends more contemporary issues are to blame (Omilisu,2016). The incessant attacks and killings by herdsmen calls for national concern. A noted by (Egbas, 2018) from the period of 1996 to 2006, it was estimated that over 121 people were killed in the states of Bauchi and Gombe due to the conflict between herdsmen and farmers.

According to Global Terrorism Index Report (2018), herdsmen was reported to have killed about 1,700 people between January and September 2018. For instance, from the period of 2010 and 2015 there were 850 clashes causing in the displacement of 62,000 people in Benue and other north central states according to (Tade, 2021). At minimum 10,000 people were reported to have died in many clashes between herdsmen and farmers since 2011, and several people have lost their various homes (Nugent 2018).

The incessant clashes involving herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria have resulted into political instability and also a threat to national security. It is alleged that the federal government of Nigeria has lost the political will to address and stop worsening situation confronting the nation. The worsening situation has paralyzed the economic growth and development of the country. If this ugly trend continues it may result to total collapse of law and order in the country. In most instances herders have been accused of destroying farmlands with their herds with nothing done to reprimand them of their actions or face the consequences of the actions. The increase of kidnapping



and killings have led to accusations and counter accusations among farmers and herdsmen particularly in southwest communities in Nigeria (Falaju, 2021).

#### 1.4 Consequences of Herdsmen-Farmers Conflicts in Nigeria

It will not be an exaggeration to say that there are no states in the six geo political zones in Nigeria that are not experiencing incessant conflicts between herdsmen and farmers. These conflicts have resulted into thousands of death, including women and children, and displacement of people and destruction of property.

According to (Abolade, 2021) a study conducted by a research development and policy advocate Zinariya Consults disclosed that more than 300,000 people have been displaced with 1,868 deaths documented in some states of the federation in the year 2018 due to the crises between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. The growing rate of conflicts in Nigeria is a demonstration of the inability of the Nigerian government to find a means to stop or find a solution to the problem. Due to the failure of the Nigerian government to address the problem many communities in the country have created an alternatives through the formation of security groups which many researchers believe have contributed to the rise in violence. A report by the Amnesty International disclosed that over of 1,105 people had been killed from 1 January, 2018 to 30 June, 2018. The report further revealed that the violent clashes between farmers and herders in parts of Nigeria, predominantly in Northern Nigeria over access to clean drinking water, land and pasture. The report also accused the Nigerian government of its failure to guarantee the protection of lives and property of her citizenry. The report also revealed government's negligence led to more attacks and killing of innocent citizens with at least 3,641 people killed between January 2016 and October 2018, 57 percent of them in 2018 alone (Amnesty International, 2018).

One of the consequences of this conflict include the drop in the number of children who are able to go to school. Those who have been displaced by this crisis about 102,000 are children who are now out of school (Babajide, 2018). These children may end up constituting nuisance to the society if there are not properly engaged into something else Additional economic impact of the violence is the loss of agricultural production and reduction in revenue generation that would ordinarily come from the farmers (Chijioke 2021).

## 1.5 Herdsmen-Farmers Conflicts: A National Problem

It is a statement of fact that conflicts between herders and farmers affect rural farming communities more than residents in towns and cities of the country. Though the farmers and herders' clashes are more pronounced in the Northern part of the country predominantly the Northwest and the North Central, interestingly, the conflict is said to be national because there is no part of the country that the herders do not roam about with their cattle with the risk of conflict and violence resulting from their activities.

Reports of attacks mostly by herdsmen as recorded by the Nigerian newspapers and others stand evidence to this national spread. The ugly situation is a national problem that required to be resolved in the national interest of Nigeria. For instance in March 2014, herdsmen attacked some villages in Southern Kaduna and slaughtered killed over 100 people. According to witnesses the attacks took place in Moro's Chiefdom in Kaura local government area of Kaduna State (Sahara Reporters, 2014).

According to (Ufuoma, 2021), on July 2021, Southern Kaduna Peoples Union (SOKAPU) purported that suspected armed herdsmen killed at least 100 Atyap people in six days. The group said about 24 villages were also burnt including hundreds of hectares of farmland.

Also, ( Wantu & Ahovi, 2021) stated that herdsmen killed over 100 persons in Katsina-Ala Local Council of Benue State on May 2021. Most homes were set on fire and farmlands damaged. Aside the loss of lives and property, the emotional trauma being experience by most families that were affected cannot be quantified. The psychological effect is immeasurable as human capital base has been reduced considerably.

The frequent clashed between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria has so many interest groups. Before now disagreements between the herdsmen and farmers are usually solved through negotiations and consultations by village heads and community leaders. The simple solutions to the disagreements are through compensation of damaged farm crop and to prevent animals from damaging the growing crops. However, with this recurring violent conflict between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria many researchers are of the view that it has a lot of political undertone to all these conflicts as there might be a kind of international conspiracy against Nigeria. From the above examples it is obvious that farmers and herders' crisis is a national problem that needs to be addressed.

## 1.6 Causes of the Conflicts between Herdsmen and Farmers in Nigeria

The constant clashes between farmers and herders have been attributed to the destruction of farmlands by the cattle which are mostly owned by the herdsmen. As noted by (Udemezue & Kanu, 2019), the herdsmen in dry season move to the wetter South to seek for greener pasture for their cattle.

These migration have therefore been characterized by cattle entering the farmers' land and sometimes causing serious damage, which eventually leads to conflicts between herdsmen and farmers (Solomon and Chinwe, 2015). (Ofem and Inyang, 2014) have identified some causes of conflicts between farmers and herders. They described conflicts between farmers and herdsmen as mostly the result of the destruction of farmland by the cattle. According to them the contamination of water by the cattle, overgrazing by the cattle, and indiscriminate defecation by the cattle as part of the problem.

According to (Blench, 2010), research assessing farmers–herdsmen conflict of 1923 in Mambila suggested that cattle's belonging to the herdsmen destroyed farmers' crops, and this resulted in conflict, which stopped herdsmen's movement within the region. As noted by (Blench, 2010) the conflict was due to violent reactions from both herdsmen and farmers.

Similarly, (Braukamper, 2000) noted that both herdsmen and farmers regularly make their living within the same environment and that they fight over natural resources like land, border, river, or vegetation.

According to (De Haan, 2002), the herders and farmers conflicts could be blamed on the way both parties handle situations at their disposal and stressed that the rate at which the cattle cause destruction on the farmers' crop and some other properties should be seen as negligence on the part of herdsmen, while bush burning and blockage of cattle routes while water points should be blamed on the farmers.

In their research, (Adebayo and Olaniyi 2008), blamed intentional grazing on farm crops for the conflict between farmers and herdsmen. Similarly, (Musa et al, 2014) argued that there are problems on both sides. They further argued that the act of overgrazing of cattle on farm crops by the herdsmen and encroaching on grazing reserves by the farmers are among the major cause of conflict between farmers and herdsmen.

According to (Adelakun et al., 2015), farm crop destructions and encroachment of the cattle path are the major causes of conflict between the farmers and herdsmen in Oyo State. According to (Moritz, 2010) issues such as scarcity of resources, reduction in the interdependence of pastoral and agricultural economies, and the lack of commitment on the part of the government to resolve the differences between herdsmen and farmers were the causes of the conflict.

According to (Bassett, 1998) scarcity of resources due to drought is one of the major problems responsible for the farmers and herders' conflict. This suggests that inadequate resources result in the scrambling for the available resources, which are vital for both farmers and herders. According to (Olaniyan et al., 2015) climatic conditions can be said to be reason for the persistent conflicts between farmers and herdsmen. They attributed these to the degree at which deserts are invading the Sahel areas that offer the means of living for the cows.

According to (Audu, 2013) climate change has caused scarcity of water in the semi-arid region in sub-Saharan Africa and is the reason for the farmers–herdsmen conflict, stressing that water has been very scarce due to climate change and is the reason for the farmers and herders' conflict. Consequently, scarcity of water has been responsible for inadequate grazing land has led to violent conflicts among farmers and herders.

However, according to Burton (2016) the neglect of the mutually favorable relationship that exists between farmers and herdsmen is one of the reasons for the farmers and herders' clashes.

## 1 7. Institutions Managing the Conflicts

In most cases the federal government has been accused for not doing much to restore sanity in the clashes between herders and farmers by the apparent neglect of the regulation of grazing in the country. No meaningful national policy was made to address the problem.

According to (Olayoku 2014) although by 2009, grazing routes had been created out in most states in the northern part of Nigeria, however out of over 4,125 grazing lands, created only about 270 were functional by 2012. However, the move to create Ruga system was dominated by politics of ethnicity in the country.

It is on record that between the period of 2002 and 2010 for example, the federal government inaugurated four commissions to probe the violent farmers-herdsmen conflicts in the North central part of Nigeria (Odemwingie, 2014). Regrettably, the outcomes of the investigations have never been applied. However, the legislature has not shown conflict resolution capabilities that can

guarantee enhancement herdsman-farmers relations in the country. The National Assembly, as a matter of fact, could not reach a resolution on the backing of the Federal Grazing Reserve Bill (Suleiman, 2012).

Regrettably also, the judiciary has not done much in resolving the crisis. The ineffectiveness of the judiciary system in Nigeria to address the plight of those affected by the farmers-herdsmen clashes across the country and has thus aided and contributed in the escalation of the problem all over the country.

The security agencies in Nigeria have failed or lack the will to provide and protect the citizens from this threat. The Nigerian Police Force have equally failed and are been accused of ineffectiveness or even been in connivance in the crises between farmers and herdsmen in the country. The inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the Nigerian police has perhaps encouraged the herdsmen, particularly in the use of sophisticated arms in conflicts with ease

Most of the commissions of inquiry established across the states of the federation to look into the remote cause of the farmers and herdsmen crises in the country with little or no results as the system lack the political will to enforce the recommendations of such Commissions. In those states that are engulfed with the conflicts as only few have acted in a crucial way (Ameh et al., 2017). In this blame game the, the local governments in Nigeria have failed in this subject matter As noted by (Uzuegbunam and Nwofia 2014), the 1976 reforms made the local governments a third tier of government after the federal, states governments. The reform also made the local governments a strong arm in conflict resolution, unfortunately they have become interested parties or instruments in the hands of the herdsmen. In most cases the local governments have failed to or lack the will to intervene in the issues of conflict in their respective areas.

In his study, Aliyu (2015), noted that the institutions involved in the resolution of herdsman-farmers conflict, traditional rulers and their institutions were rated highest in terms of influence and result. Unfortunately the traditional institutions are limited to advice-giving roles to the government.

The inability of the actors charged with the responsibility of resolving conflict at all levels in the country have escalated more conflicts between farmers and herdsmen cross the federation, This dangerous situation has made citizens to go contrary to the law guiding the community since most time no arrest are made, non-prosecuted and punished to serve as deterrent to others

The abysmal failure on the organization of conflict resolution in the country has led to the ineffectual management of current instruments of conflict resolution. Resolving the farmers-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria will start with empowering the existing engagements of conflict resolution in the country as well as reviving the system of conflict resolve. Lack of political will on the political class and the elite to solve the menace of insecurity in the country, the best option is to engage the traditional rulers full time for a possible and more proactive solution to the herdsman and farmers conflict (Igwubor, 2020).

## 1.8 Research Questions

The following research questions were investigated:

- (a) Main perceived reasons behind conflicts between herders and farmers.
- (b) Differences in opinions of herders, farmers, traders, and teachers regarding reasons behind conflicts between herders and farmers.
- (c) Differences in causes behind the conflicts between herders and farmers perceived by three ethnic groups; Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba.
- (d) Differences between responses of herders, farmers, traders, or teachers on which institutions were considered the most efficient in managing the conflicts between herders and farmers.

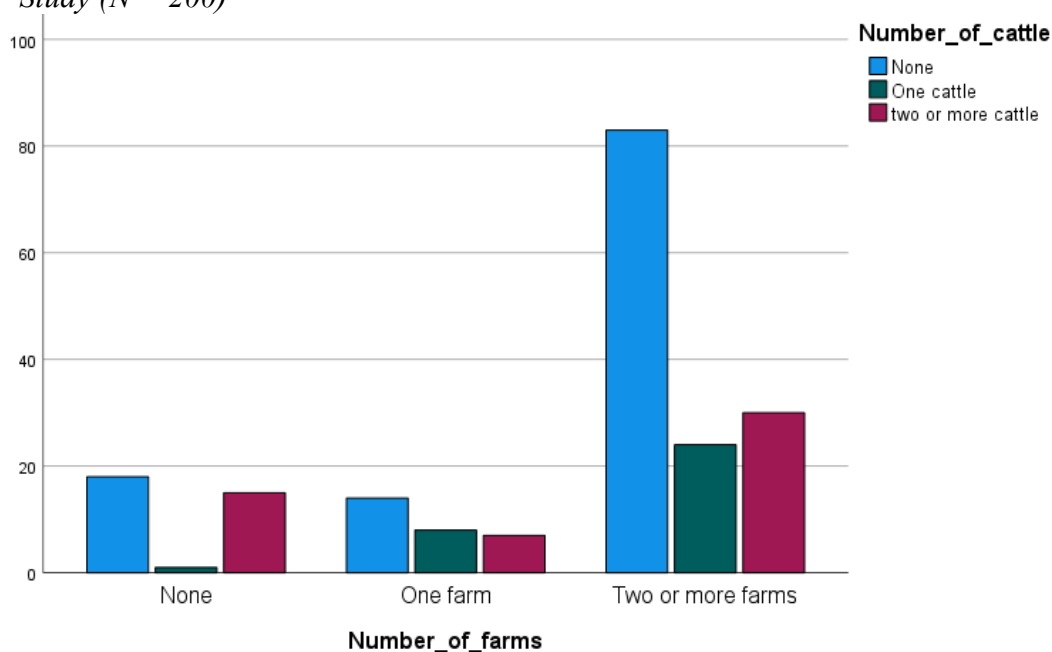
## 2. Method

### 2.1 Sample

A questionnaire was filled in by 200 respondents (87 women, 113 men) in Nigeria. The mean age was 33.3 years ( $SD = 9.7$ ) for women, and 37.9 ( $SD = 13.0$ ) for men, the age difference was significant [ $t_{(198)} = 2.79$   $p = .006$ ]. The respondents belonged to three ethnic groups: Hausa 29 %, Igbo 46 %, and Yoruba 25 %. Ninety-five of the participants were farmers, 39 were teachers, 38 were traders, 27 were herders, and one was a banker. Of the respondents, 57.5 % did not own any cattle, 16.5 % owned one, and 26 % owned two or more. Seventeen percent did not own a farm, 14.5 % owned one farm, and 68.5 % owned more than one farm (Fig. 1).

Figure 1

*Number of Farms and Number of Cattle Owned by the Respondents in the Study (N = 200)*



### 2.2 Instrument

A questionnaire was constructed for the study. It included (a) questions regarding perceived causes behind conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria, and (b) efficiency of institutions in

managing the conflicts. Responses for both were given on a five point scale (0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = undecided, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree). For single items, see Table 1 and 2.

Table 1  
*Items Measuring Perceived Causes of the Conflicts between Herders and Farmers*

Causes of the Conflicts
Indiscriminate bush burning
Pollution of water points
Lack of access to water points
Killing of stray cattle
Land encroachment
Crops damage by cattle
Inadequate grazing reserves
Land use policy that vested control of land to government authorities
Change in the climate
The land tenure system
Disregard for rules and regulations
Foreign influence or interest in the conflict

Table 2  
*Items Measuring Perceived Efficiency of Institutions*

Are the following institutions efficient in their role of managing the conflict in your area?
Institutions
The Police
Courts
Local Government Committees
Traditional Rulers

### 2.3 Procedure

The data was collected with paper-and-pencil questionnaires. The collection took place in Southeastern Nigeria in 2021. The data was collected by the author.



## 2.4 Ethical Considerations

The study adheres to the principles concerning human research ethics of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013), as well as guidelines for the responsible conduct of research of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity

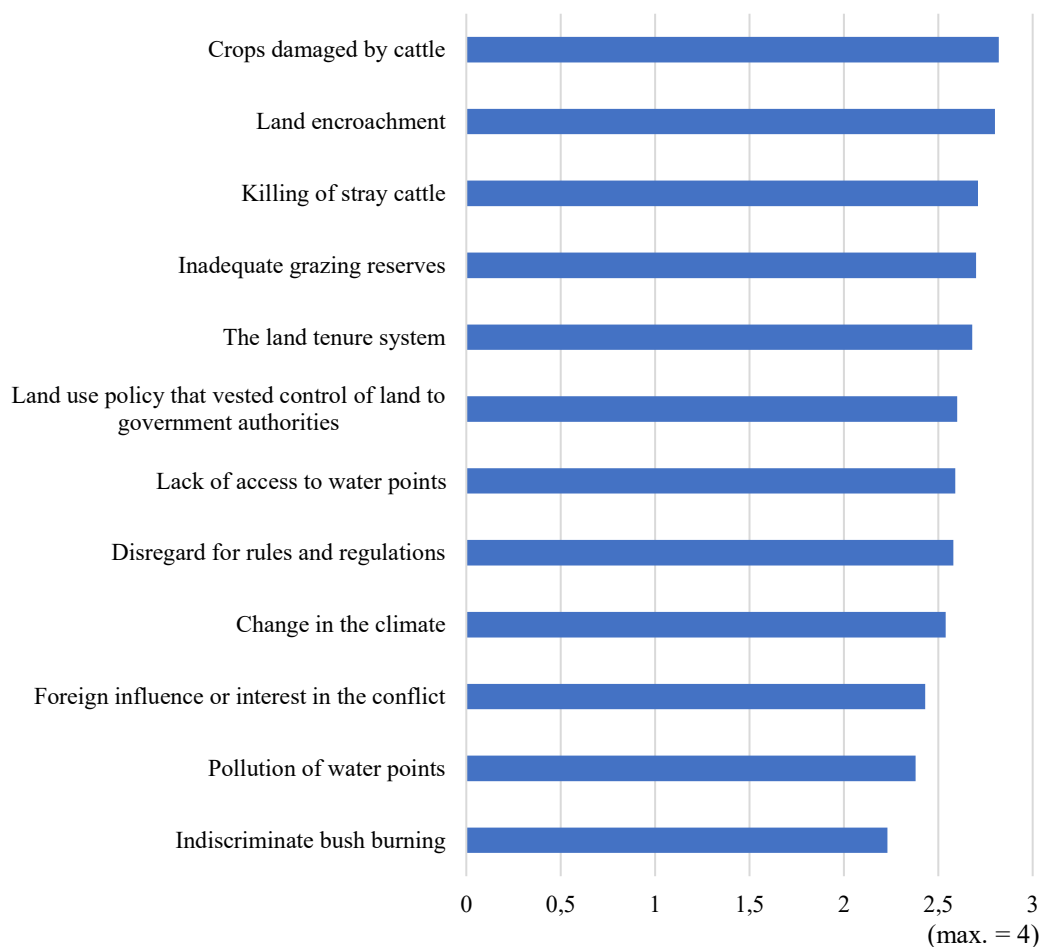
## 3. Results

### 3.1 Perceived Causes behind the Conflicts between Herders and Farmers

A within-subject multivariate analysis of variance (WSMANOVA) showed significant differences between the different perceived causes for the conflict between herders and farmers [ $F_{(11, 189)} = 5.82, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .253$ ] (Fig 2). Crops damaged by cattle, land encroachment, and killing of stray cattle were the main perceived reasons behind conflicts (Fig. 2).

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) showed no significant differences regarding the perceived causes between herders, farmers, traders, or teachers.

Figure 2  
*Perceived Causes of the Conflicts between Herders and Farmers*



A multivariate analysis (MANOVA) was conducted with ethnic group as independent variable and twelve perceived causes behind the conflicts between herders and farmers as dependent variables. The multivariate analysis was significant (Table 3). The univariate analyses showed that the Yoruba scored higher than the other groups on the items regarding perceived causes behind the conflicts between herders and farmers, with one exception. The Hausa scored highest on regarding the land use policy that vested control of land to government authorities as a cause behind conflicts between herders and farmers.

**Table 3**  
*Results of a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with Ethnic Group as Independent Variable and 12 Types of Perceived Causes behind the Conflicts between Herders and Farmers as Dependent Variables (N = 200)*

	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> <	$\eta_p^2$	Significant differences
<b>Effect of Ethnic Group</b>					
Multivariate analysis	2.24	24, 374	.001	.125	
<b>Univariate analyses</b>					
Indiscriminate bush burning	9,05	2, 197	.001	.084	Y, H > I
Pollution of water points	13,00	“	.001	.117	Y, H > I
Lack of access to water points	10,84	“	.001	.099	Y > H > I
Killing of stray cattle	3,84	“	.023	.038	Y > I
Land encroachment	6,86	“	.001	.065	Y > I
Crops damage by cattle	3,39	“	.036	.033	Y > I
Inadequate grazing reserves	3,11	“	.047	.031	Y > I
Land use policy that vested control of land to government authorities	3,68	“	.027	.036	H > I
Change in the climate	3,47	“	.033	.034	Y > I
The land tenure system	6,12	“	.003	.058	Y > H, I
Disregard for rules and regulations	4,50	“	.012	.044	Y > I
Foreign influence or interest in the conflict	3,51	“	.032	.034	Y > I

*Note.* H = Hausa, I = Igbo, Y = Yoruba

### 3.2 Perceived Efficiency of Institutions in Managing Conflicts between Herders and Farmers

A within-subject multivariate analysis of variance (WSMANOVA) showed significant differences in perceived efficiency between the four institutions included in the study in managing the conflicts [ $F_{(3, 197)} = 17.90, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .214$ ]. According to the respondents, the traditional rulers were considered the most efficient in managing conflicts (2.76), followed by local governmental committees (2.74), courts (2.44), and the police (2.10).

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) showed no significant differences regarding the perceived efficiency of the institutions between responses of herders, farmers, traders, or teachers.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Summary of the Findings

The aim of the thesis was to investigate (a) the main perceived reasons behind conflicts between herders and farmers, (b) differences in opinions of herders, farmers, traders, and teachers regarding reasons behind said conflicts, (c) differences in causes behind the conflicts between herders and farmers perceived by three ethnic groups; Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, (d) differences between responses of herders, farmers, traders, or teachers on which institutions were considered the most efficient in managing the conflicts between herders and farmers.

Most of the respondents were Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba tribes of Nigeria. Moreover, out of all the organizations that participated in the study ninety-five percent were farmers. This is in consistent with the previous study (Bello, 2013), which recognized that farmers were the majority attacked by Fulani herdsmen in the southeastern region of Nigeria.

Demographic findings among the ethnic groups studied, showed that the Yoruba ethnic group of Nigeria scored higher than other ethnic groups regarding the causes of herders-farmers conflict. Exception is bound to the opinions raised because the respondents believed that government's control of land use can cause such conflicts. However, the Hausa ethnic group believed that the land use policy made by the Nigerian government is the cause of the herders-farmers conflict in country.

Moreover, there was no significant difference between reasons behind herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria. Although indiscriminate bush burning was mentioned as the least reason, some respondents believe that crops damaged by cattle, land encroachment, and the killing of stray cattle contributed to the conflict. Okereke (2012) and Bello (2013) found that the conflict arose as a result of land and crops destruction in many farming communities across the country.

The findings of the present study also suggest that traditional rulers are more efficient in managing conflicts in the communities. Similarly, traditional rulers such as chiefs, Ozors, and village heads have the highest power to manage herders-farmers conflicts due to it being vested on them by the communities.

In a study of the institutions involved in the resolution of herdsmen-farmers conflict in country, (Aliyu, 2015) it was suggested that traditional rulers and their institutions are more result-oriented, and that they achieve peace and tranquility between Fulani herdsmen and farmers.

However, state governments have severally responded to the conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in their states by instituting Commissions of Inquiry into the causes and possible ways of resolving the conflict. In most cases, state and local governments lack the political and legal will to affect the recommendations of such commissions (Ameh et al., 2017; Uzuegbunam & Nwofia 2014)

## 4.2. Methodological Issues and Limitations of the Study

The data for the current study were collected from the Southeast region, which is one of the six geographical regions in Nigeria. As such, the results are limited. Future studies in the area could be carried out in other regions of the country. Moreover, the study was a cross-sectional survey and therefore, underlying causes of the herdsmen and farmers conflict cannot be ascertained.

## 4.3 Implications of the Study

Due to the scarcity of related studies in the Southeastern region of Nigeria, the current study may serve as an exposition to the communities and the government. Conversely, land use policy constructed by the Federal government as means of achieving peace and order among land users should be strictly adhered to and implemented at all levels of government.

Since traditional rulers have been generally accepted to be efficient in managing conflicts in various communities, political office holders, the federal government, both international and local organizations need to involve them in decision-making as to how to resolve Fulani herdsmen and farmers conflicts.

Furthermore, an investigation should be carried out to identify families, individuals and institutions who are victims of the conflict. The conflict has subjected many to destitution and a lack of basic needs such as food and shelter. Some may have been traumatized by the event and should be identified and placed in mental rehabilitation and be given support to regain themselves from the impact of the conflict.

## 4.4. Suggestions for Future Research

The study was intended to provide an understanding of the causes behind conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria, and the perceived efficiency of institutions in managing the conflicts. Future research could investigate the effects of these conflicts on the mental health of

victims, the cultural and religious undertones of the conflicts, the consequences of the crises on Nigeria's international image and foreign direct investment drive in Nigeria. Further research could also examine the causes and effects of the herdsman-farmers clashes in South-South and Southwest of Nigeria.

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