

**Implication of Protracted Farmers-Herders Conflicts on Food Security in Sub-Sahara
Africa: The Nigerian Experience**

Authors

Taiwo, Busayo Ayodeji and **Irene**, Oseremen Felix

Affiliation

Department of Peace & Conflict Studies,
Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria

Email

taiwobusayo22@gmail.com
osereme1@gmail.com

Phone

+234 7066835154, +234 8142543648

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Abstract

The protracted conflict between herdsmen and farmers has been a major challenge to food security in Nigeria. Today, the conflict has spread over wide geographical areas on the continent of Africa. In the same manner, the weapons used in the conflict have moved from small and light arms to use of heavy and complex weapons and ammunition such as rifles and AK47 among others. Many communities in sub-Sahara Africa, have been greatly affected by conflict between crop farmers and cattle herders. It is against this background that this study investigates the implications of the protracted farmers-herdsmen conflict on food production in Nigeria. The data for this study was drawn from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was generated from field survey carried out in the study area. Key Informants Interview (KII) was also employed to enrich the findings of the study. The qualitative study adopted purposive sampling technique to select samples for the study. The findings of the study reveals conflicts result in low productivity and food insecurity with attendant low financial income/earnings from Agricultural sector, and increase in price of food items further pushing the country farther below poverty line, and many households struggling to survive.

Keywords: Farmer, Herders, Conflict, Implication, Food Security, Nigeria, Africa

Introduction

Since the return to democracy in 1999, Nigeria has been grappling with diverse security challenges, chief among them are insurgency, electoral violence, kidnapping and most recently, the herders-farmers conflicts among others. Conflict is an inevitable feature of every human society and conflict over resources is not unnatural in societies where natural resources determine the means of livelihood and survival. The evolution of the human society itself attests to the fact that every individual and group in the society has experienced one form of conflict or the other, especially over resources which serves as the hub of their survival and social relations. The human society is not devoid of conflicts which usually lead to changes in social relations, adjustment and adaptation (Gefu and Kolawole, 2012). These conflicts are not only induced by scarcity of environmental resources, but are escalated by the feelings of neglect, marginalization and outright deprivation of the utilization of these resources.

Furthermore, it is a known fact that natural or environmental resources are the bulk of renewable and non-renewable stocks of material resources that exist in the natural environment that are both scarce and economically useful in production and consumption, either in their raw state or after a minimal amount of processing (World Trade Report, 2010). These renewable resources serve as the main input in production process for both herdsmen and farmers in every climate and regions of the world. While farmers depend on land and usable water for the cultivation

of arable and cash crops, and rearing of domestic animals for subsistence (personal consumption) or for commercial purposes, herdsmen heavily rely on water, safer climate and arable lands for the survival and productivity of their herds of cattle. In essence, land and water are prime renewable resources that play pivotal roles in the production process of both herdsmen and farmers. Therefore, conflict between these two groups of resource users is always centered on the scarcity, deprivation and uneven allocation of these resources.

The last few years witnessed violent clashes between pastoralists and crop farmers in various parts of Nigeria particular over grazing resources which has led to the loss of numerous lives and properties, food shortages arising from abandonment of farm lands, destruction of crops, environmental degradation and conflicts of ethno-religious coloration among the various sections that make up the Nigerian State (Chukwuemeka, Aduma & Eneh, 2018) and this indicates a very great danger and a serious security threat to peace, unity, and socio-economic development of the country and Ekiti State. Pages of newspapers and empirical studies are filled with stories of massive killings arising from the conflicts between herders/farmers across various States in Nigeria particularly Ekiti State. Areas affected by the conflict in the South West States include Ondo, Ogun, Oyo, and Osun, State, which have left heavy casualty figures. Other parts of the country affected by the crisis include Enugu State, Abia, Anambra, Delta, Benue, Kogi, Benue, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau and Edo states respectively. Virtually all States in Nigeria have had (or are still experiencing) the herdsmen-farmers conflict (Abraham, 2017).

Food crop farmers and pastoral herders have coexisted side-by-side for centuries with many herding and farming communities developing interdependent relationships through reciprocity and support. At the same time, conflicts between herders and farmers have existed for centuries which adversely affected the security of lives and properties (Chabal, Engel and Gentili 2009). Conflicts between pastoralists and farmers have been ages – long in Nigeria; this is caused by increases in the herd sizes, due to improved conditions of the cattle, compelled the pastoralists to seek for more pastures beyond their geographical limit, unavoidable drought in the northern area and more pressures on the land resources (Bello, 2013).

Many writers, commentators and researchers have expressed different opinions and dimensions to the causes of these conflicts. Some people see it from the cultural/historical perspective of nomadic pastoralism and climate change. Yet, others see it from socio-economic perspective and the struggle for resource control (Adogi, 2013). Other groups also view the conflicts from ethno-religious angle, while another school of thought views the crisis from the land use planning occasioned by land tenure system in Nigeria. Those who support the land resource control posited their arguments on the presumption that farmers belief that they are the traditional owners of the land and are strongly in support of the old order which gives them inheritance of land as ancestry hereditary, patrimonial and transmissible and opposed to any unauthorized occupation or intrusion on their lands by herdsmen for forceful grazing. The herdsmen on the other hand, want free access to any grazing land for their cattle and reject or oppose to the old order of land as hereditary and transmissible. In pursuance of these conflicting interests by the two parties, clashes ensued.

According to Onwunyi and Mbah (2019), the Fulani herdsmen accuse the crop farmers of encroaching into their grazing routes and fields, thus preventing them from feeding their cattle. Crop farmers, on the other hand, cry and argue that the fear of gun wielding cattle herders not only prevent them from going to the farm but also that cultivated farm lands and crop yields are destroyed by cattle, resulting to poverty and unemployment in the land. The main consequences of the entire problems are loss of human lives, animals, crops and ethnic tensions, particularly due to the reactive behavior of the Nigerian-state in tackling these perilous problem.

The Herdsmen and Farmers Clashes in Ikole, Ekiti State for instance, has negatively affected food production due to the prevalent fear of the crop farmers who are usually uncertain of their future and whose lives are always in danger. The armed nomadic herders have continued to pose a colossal threat to the lives and properties of the local communities in Ikole and Ekiti state at large. For instance, the incessant attacks being perpetrated and recorded in the state are quite alarming, and the attitude of both the state and federal government has remained weak and nonchalant. It is a fact that farming system in Ekiti state has been distorted. The spate at which this crises threaten the peace and productivity of the State therefore calls for attention. In spite of the amount of resources budgeted to maintain internal security in the state by the government, the herders-farmers crises in Ekiti State has remained intractable leading to food insecurity in the state (Okoli & Addo, 2018).

In several places, herders have clashed with farmers and their host communities over cows' destruction of crops; farmers' encroachment on grazing reserves and indiscriminate bush burning by nomads that unremarkably results in loss of crops (Adeoye, 2017). The apparent boldness of the perpetrators has continued to draw in mixed perceptions. Whereas some understand it as mere farming, pastureland and water dispute; others see it as reprisals in defense of live stocks from banditry in farming communities (Eyekpimi & Mikailu, 2016). The crisis has become a recurring decimal, especially in Ekiti State and indeed a time bomb, which appears not to have been given the desired national attention by government at all levels. Threats to food security have socio-economic implications which could impinge on development if not tackled timely. Reports in newspapers and empirical studies have indicated that tension exists in every parts of country including Ekiti State as a result of protracted conflicts between herders and farmers and If the problem is not tackled beforehand, it could lead to crisis and may be more catastrophic because of its spread, which may degenerate into a threat to food security, peace, development and National security.

As the world sets a new global agenda for sustainable development, security and development research becomes very crucial to development. Thus, the fact that there cannot be sustainable development without peace and security, and that without development and poverty eradication, there will be no sustainable peace.

It is for the foregoing reasons that this study is carried out to identify the immediate and remote causes of herdsmen and food crop farmers' conflicts in Nigeria (using Ekiti State as specific study area) with a view to finding lasting solutions to the problem so as to pave way for peace, harmony and development.

Food Security in Nigeria

Food security can be described as the condition in which a person have access to good, quality and sufficient food to consume in order to live healthy and productive life. According to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Africa, defined food security as a situation “When all people, at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life”. Eme (2014) add that food security is dependent on agricultural production, food imports and donations, employment opportunities and income earnings, intra-household decision-making and resource allocation, health care utilization and caring practices.

Food security has been defined in different ways by different scholars. The World Bank defines food security as a condition where everyone has access to sufficient food to eat and live a healthy and productive life (World Bank, 1986). This means that there should be the absence of other factors like crisis, drought or war that can make food unavailable for the teeming population to eat. Food sufficiency with no hunger or fear of starvation is what could be regarded as food security and it comprise availability, accessibility, adequacy of utilization and stability of supply at all times. According to Henry (2017), when these conditions are non-existent or inadequate, people are food- insecure. Food insecurity, therefore, results when not everyone has access to sufficient food to live a healthy and productive life or when they cannot meet target consumption levels yearly. The emphasis here is on access to sufficient food for a healthy and productive life that is free from hunger and the fear of starvation. People without physical, social and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs to enable them to produce and stay healthy suffer from food scarcity and insecurity. When people have food, but not enough in quantity and quality, they are still food-insecure. The mere availability of food does not guarantee food security except when it is of adequate quantity and quality. When the food supply is unstable and unreliable for one reason or another, food insecurity is said to exist.

Shehu (2018) opined that 'food insecurity exists when people lack sustainable physical or economic access to enough safe, nutritious, and socially acceptable food for a healthy and productive life.' This may also result in severe social, psychological, and behavioral consequences. On the other hand, insecurity of food may manifest feelings of alienation, powerlessness, anxiety, stress, and reduced productivity, reduced work, social performance, and reduced income earnings, and this has direct effects on the economic development of the individuals.

As Tolu, Adelokun, and Akindiyo (2018) put it, ‘Herdsman - Farmers crisis affects different facets of the economy. There is social and political instability and also food insecurity, particularly in the affected areas. Most farmland and food produce have been destroyed as a result of this crisis and this is posing threat to food security. Farmers could no longer go to the farm and harvest their farm produce for fear of attack, which invariably translates to a loss of income, resources and major source of livelihood. There is a social, economic and political tension as a result of the violence. Emotional exhaustion, trauma and social – psychological effects are evidence of instability.

Destruction of crops manifests in loss of crop yields and consequently negatively affects the quantity of supply of food to the market. Every part of Nigeria has one form of security problem or another because of the failure of the government through its security agencies to protect lives and property. The Southern parts (South-South, South-East, and South-West) are plagued by cult killings, kidnappings, armed robbery, farmers – herders’ clashes and other vices that successfully impeded sufficient food production because the people live in fear of their lives. The North (North-west, North-Central and North-East) are engulfed by the terrorism, armed banditry and herdsmen killing spree. There is palpable fear in all facets of national life, including the polity. This also implies that there is food insecurity in the country. As Abur (2014) sums it; despite successive government's efforts over the years to achieve food security in the country, through the setting up of several agricultural development institutions, and special programs, still, very large proportions of Nigerians are in hunger and poverty. This is because, the recent events such as the crisis between farmers and Fulani herdsmen, the inter-communal crisis has been threatening the efforts of the government at attaining food security for the country.

Farmers / Herders Crisis: Experience from Ikole, Ekiti State

Fulani herdsmen and farmers clashes in Ekiti state are dated back to 2009. Before then, there has been peaceful relationship among farmers and herdsmen in the states, except few cases of minor misunderstandings that did not claim life (Doyin, 2017). The feud was caused by controversy around issues such as farming, grazing land and water. The farmers accused the herdsmen of damaging their crops by failing to control their animals while the herdsmen equally claimed that the farming communities steal their cattle (Adeleke, 2018).

Agriculture is the major sector upon which the majority of the state population depends on for their livelihood. Agriculture was able to grow at a sufficient rate to provide enough food and employment for the increasing population and it contributed significantly to the foreign earnings of the State and employment generations of the teeming population. The role of Agriculture in accelerating economic growth and the development process of the country is now being taken for granted even though agriculture is the bedrock upon which countries depend on for their economic growth and restructuring. The seeming neglect of agriculture as a national income generator has equally affected the growth of the economy directly. This has brought about the term food security as part of the country's vocabulary (Udemezue and Anedo, 2015).

Rural food crop farmers and livestock breeders are the major sources of food in Ekiti state. However, the increase in the herd size due to the improved conditions of the cattle made the cattle herdsmen look for more pasture beyond their limited ranch, on the other hand, increase in population have imposed so much greater pressure on farming land and this be the reasons the farmers and nomads have been at incessant violent conflicts over the limited land for grazing (Alhassan, 2013).

According to Bolarinwa, Oluwakemi, and Foloruso (2012), Ekiti state has recorded several violent conflicts in many rural communities from 2009 till date, hundreds of death have been recorded and this have distort farmer's livelihood since they live and earn their living from farming.

The combination of a growing cattle population, the effects of climate change on the availability of water and forage crops, as well as the lack of access to North Eastern foraging grounds due to the Boko Haram crisis are the proximate causes of the increasing tensions between farming communities and cattle herders. Consequently, the herders now seek means of economic survival to the detriment of the farmers who put up stiff resistance in the way and manner the herders encroach into their farms with their cattle to eat up the crops and grasses alike.

Udemezue and Kanu (2019) argue that the activities of the nomad in Nigeria since the 1960s have fundamentally undermined the stability and development of the state and economy. The social, economic, and political tension created as a result of numeral escalations of violent conflict has raised fundamental national questions for the survival of the Nigerian state. However, once conflict launches into the agricultural system as a result of the activities of cattle herders, other issues set in, farmers can lose focus on the result they supposed to achieve. Owing to this, it leads to total conflicts between farmers and cattle-herders, which in return cause low productivity among farmers. Conflicts distort the economy and worsen the income inequality of rural farmers. This has greatly affected agricultural production.

Today, what seemed like pockets of violence in some parts of the country, especially the southern region of Nigeria, has degenerated into a major national security crisis in the country, defying several solutions (Mbaeze and Nnaji, 2018).

Method

Research methodology is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the procedures applied to a field of study (Kothari, 2004). Methodology involves procedures of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena so as to solve a problem; it refers to the process, or techniques of conducting research.

The area of study is Ikole-Ekiti local government in Ekiti state. The study will cover four communities in the local government. The data for this study would be collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data Would be obtained from the subjects (respondents) selected for this study, while the secondary data would be derived from information obtained from documented sources such as textbooks, journal, articles, published research reports, internet and other print media.

The sampling technique used for this study is probability sampling, because the population of this study will be chosen randomly from the whole population. The sample size of the study was determine using simple random sampling technique.40 respondents were selected from four (4) communities with an average of 10 respondents per community will be randomly picked in the area of the study.

The major instruments which was used to obtain primary data/information from the respondents is in-depth interview. Data for the study was collected by the use of interview schedule with the respondents. Where necessary, local languages were used to enable researcher get detailed information from the respondents. The data collected in this study was presented and analyzed with qualitative methods.

The data collected in this study were presented and analyzed with qualitative methods. The researcher made use of statistical package for social science (SPSS) to analyze the socio-economic data of the respondent and Atlas TI analysis software was use to analyze data.

In order to ensure the validity of the instrument, the researcher presented the interview questions to his project supervisor and experts in Education who scrutinized it. Only items found relevant for the study were utilized while items found to be irrelevant were discarded.

For ethical consideration, the collection of data for this study did not tamper with the fundamental right of the respondents. While putting into consideration their emotional and intellectual capacity. The identities of the respondents were divulged and the information provided was used strictly for the purpose of this research.

Result

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

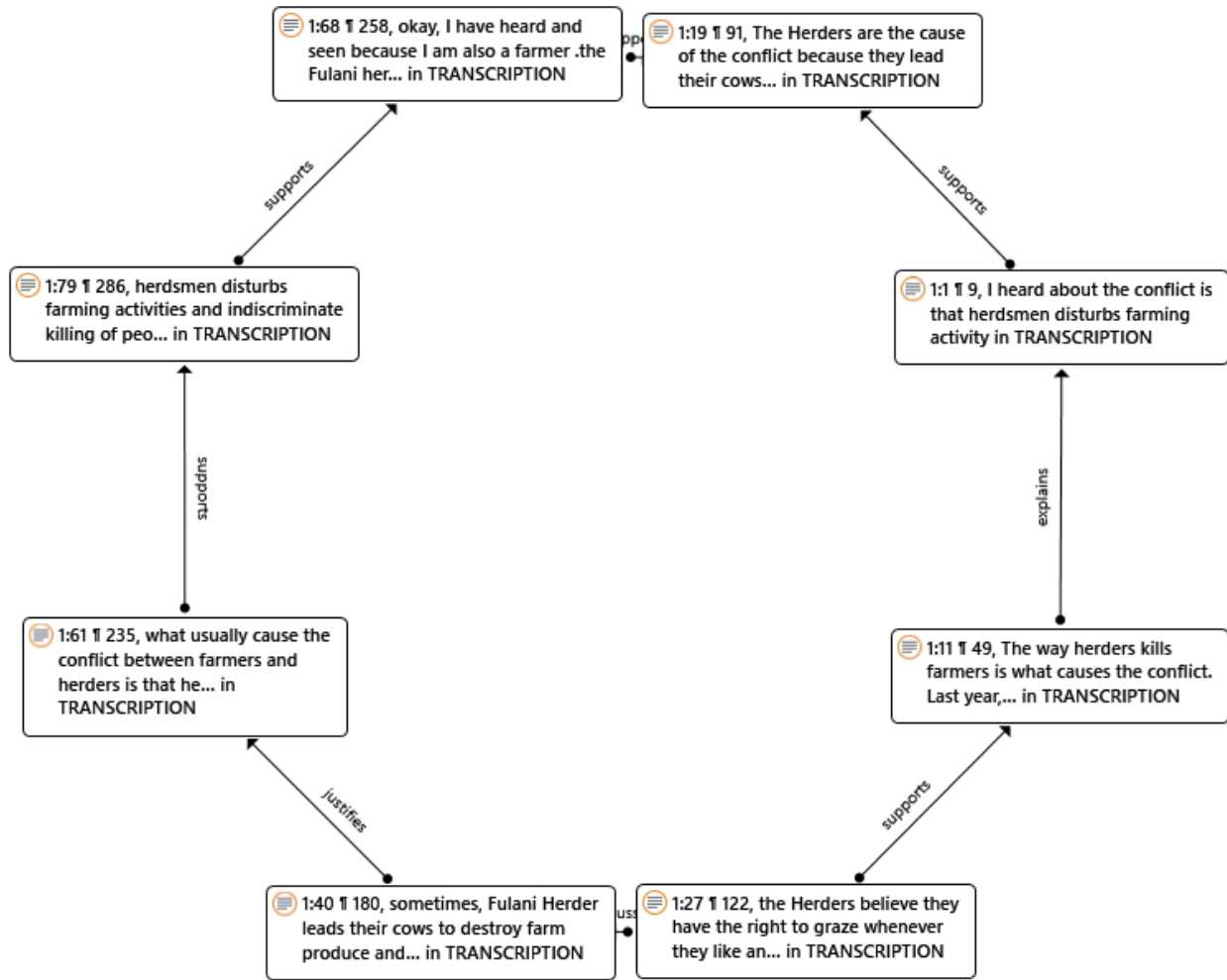
Table 1: Showing the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	30	75%
Female	10	25%
Age of Respondent		
25-35	10	25%
36-46	16	40%
47-57	14	35%
Religion		
Christianity	28	70%
Islam	12	30%
Marital Status		
Single	8	20%
Married	32	80%
Occupation		
Civil servant	10	25%
Farmer	16	40%
Trader	6	15%
Security Agencies	2	5%
Cattle Dealer	2	5%
Traditional leader	4	10%
Educational Attainment		

No formal Education	4	10%
Secondary school	8	20%
Ond/ND	12	30%
BSc/Hnd	16	40%

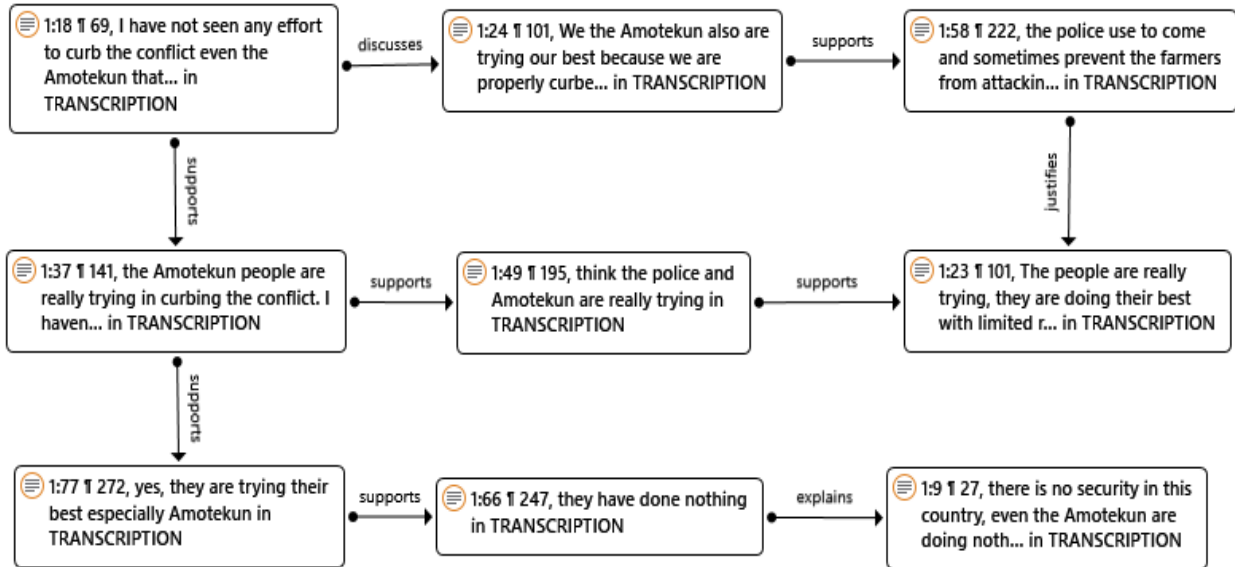
Research question one: What is the perception of the informants about the causes of protracted conflicts between the farmers and the herdsmen in Ikole Ekiti?

Figure 1: showing the network analysis on causes of protracted conflicts between the farmers and the herdsmen in Ikole Ekiti.



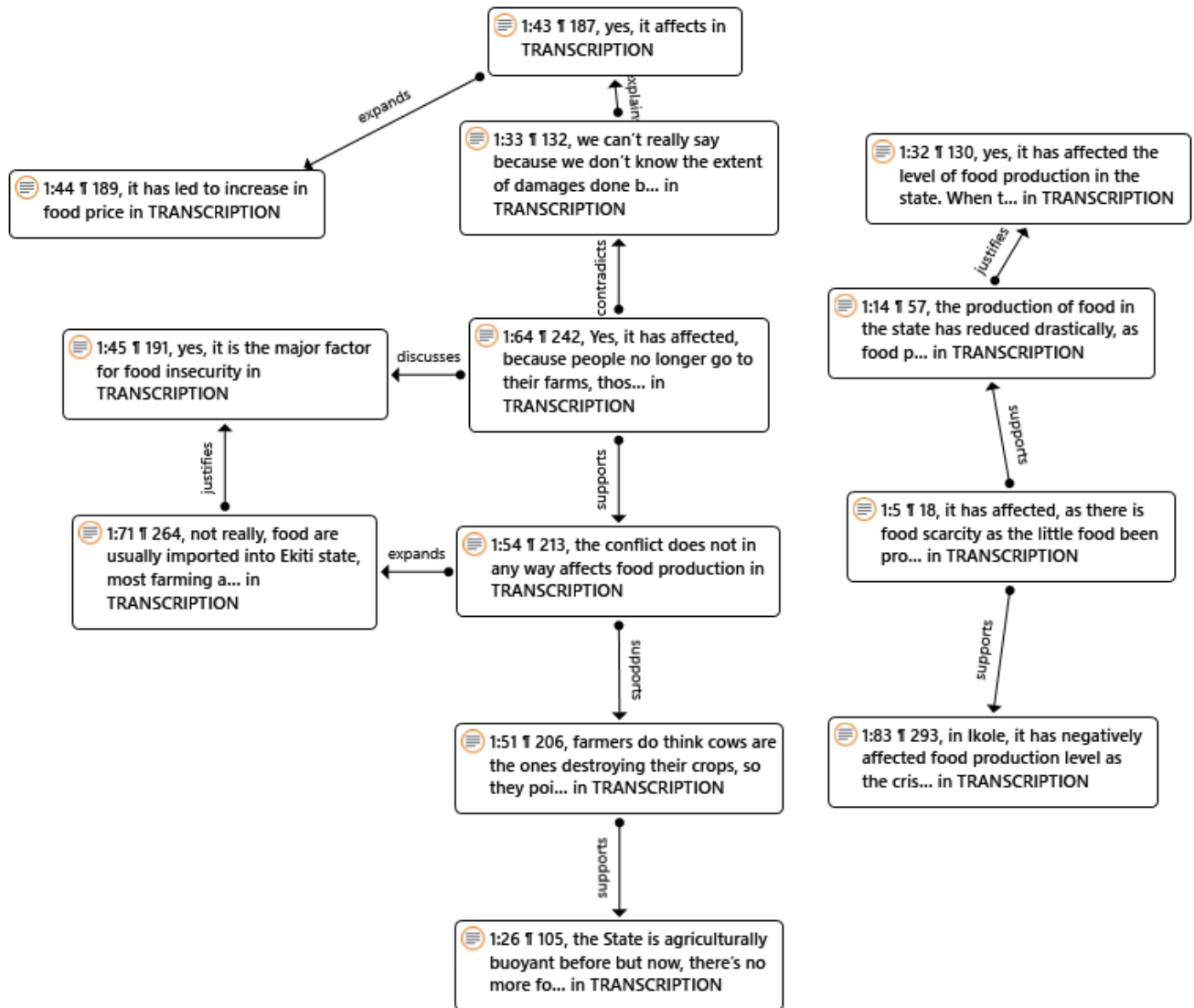
Research question two: What is the perception of the informants about involvement of the government in settling or resolving the conflict between the farmers and the herdsman in Ikole Ekiti?

Figure 2: shows the network analysis on Involvement of the government in settling or resolving the conflict between the farmers and the herdsman in Ikole Ekiti.



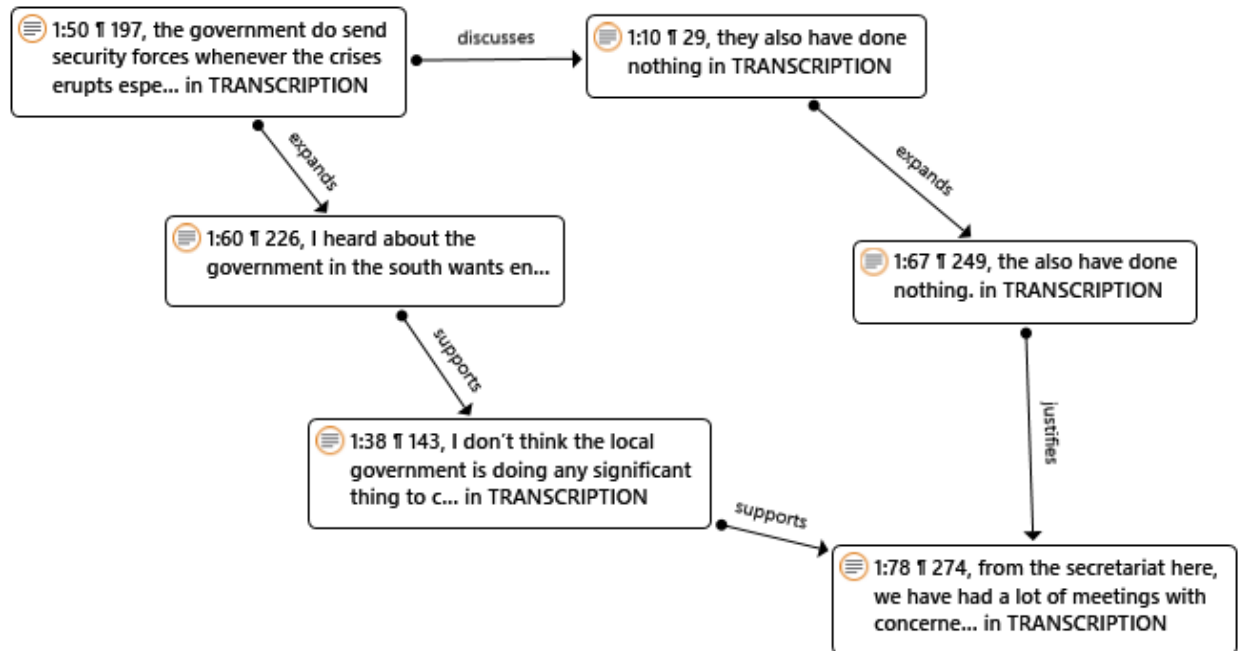
Research question three: What is the perception of the informants about Impact of herdsmen and farmers crisis on the level of food security in Ikole Ekiti state?

Figure 3: shows the network analysis of Perception of the informants about Impact of herdsmen and farmers crisis on the level of food security in Ikole Ekiti state



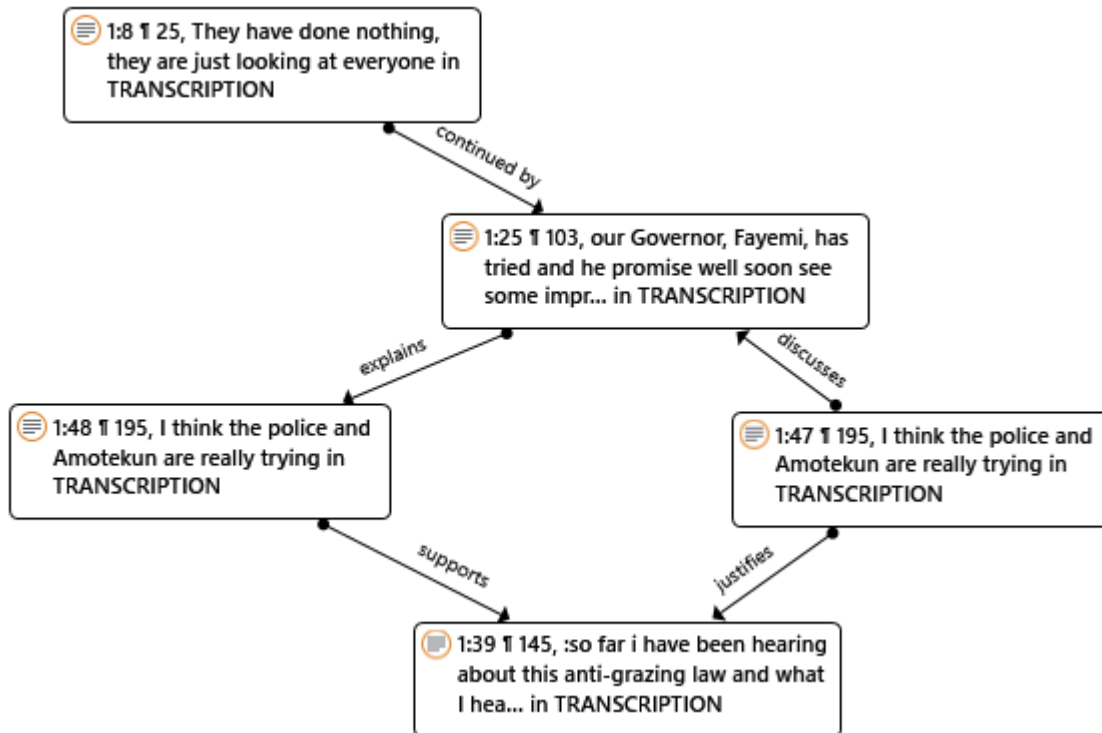
Research question four: What policy measures put in place by the state and local government to resolve the herders/farmers conflict in Ikole, Ekiti State?

Figure 4: Shows the network analysis on Policy measures put in place by the state and local government to resolve the herders/farmers conflict in Ikole, Ekiti State.

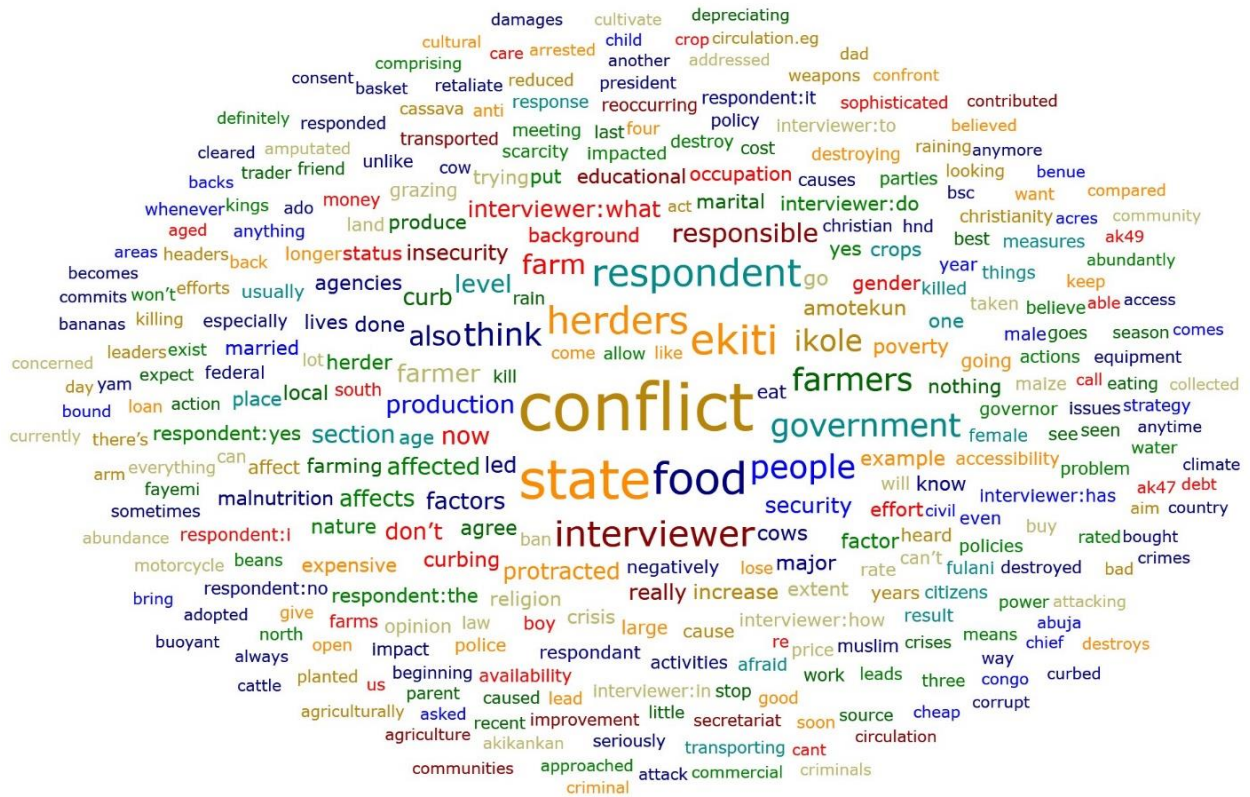


Research question five: What is the Perception of the informants about Effort of the security apparatus in resolving the herders/farmers conflict in Ikole, Ekiti State?

Figure 5.0 shows the network analysis of informants about Effort of the security apparatus in resolving the herders/farmers conflict in Ikole, Ekiti State



Word Cloud On Protracted Farmers / Herders' Conflict And Its Implication On Food Security In Ikole, Ekiti State.



Discussion

The table 1 above shows that 30(75%) informants that participated in this survey are male and the remaining 10(25%) are female. The table also shows that the 10 (25%) informants that participated in survey belong to 25-35, 16(40%) respondents are 36-46 and the remaining 14(35%) informants belong to the age bracket 47 and above. Lastly, 16(40%) informants are farmers and civil servants are 10(25%), 2(5%) informant are Security Agents, 2 (5%) informant are Cattle dealers, 6 (15%) informants are traders and the remaining 4(10%) are traditional leaders.

The finding shows that the cause of the conflict between herders and farmers is that herdsmen disturbs farming activities and indiscriminate killing of people for instance one of the informants said:

“The way herders kill farmers is what causes the conflict. Last year, a lot of farmers were killed by these criminal herders. People are afraid especially the youth to go to the farm and the Fulani eats up the farm produce of the farmers. The herders sometimes uproot farm crops and give to their cows to eat”. Another informant said “ what I heard about the conflict is that herdsmen disturbs farming activities and indiscriminate killing of people, for example, a young after the day hard work wanted to drink water, after finding the water source, he was approached by four herders who questioned him (the boy) that they were looking for their cows, and the boy responded, saying he does not know the where about of the cows, they asked the boy to leave and as he turned his back, he was shot by the headers. The boy is now at teaching hospital at Ile-Ife, he is currently amputated. With this incident, people are afraid of going to farm”

The analysis also shows that the security apparatus in the state is trying to put an end to the killings and rude grazing of the farmer produce by the Fulani herdsmen. The people stated that Western Nigeria Security Network codenamed Operation Amoketun have tried even more than the conflict in Ikole, Ekiti state. For instance, one of the informants said:

“The security agents are really trying, they are doing their best with limited resource and equipment. The equipment or weapons used by the police is relatively low compared to what the herders have. We the Amoketun also are trying our best because we are properly protected. When we go to the field, the (Herders) arm themselves with sophisticated weapons such as AK47 and AK49 but we arm ourselves with the power God has given us and we do come out victorious, I believed the police and other security agencies including the Amoketun are given better weapons, we would do a good job”.

The finding of the research has also shown that the conflict has a very negative impact on the lives of the people as both young and old in the community cannot walk freely in the farm because of the fear of been killed by the supposed strangers who have turned themselves into the legit landowners and this act has invariably made the prices of food to increase inordinately. All

the respondent agreed that this conflict has caused a reduction and the standard of living of the people however, the state before time is one of poorest state but the conflict has heightened the condition of things. One of the informants said:

“There is hunger in the land as a result of this conflict. There is nothing in our farm again. To eat 3 square meals is now a problem. A farmer that only has one source of livelihoods which is farming, when farm land is being cleared by the herders what do you expect them to eat”.

Another respondent said:

“It affects, because people do not eat what they feel like eating and they buy food at an expensive rate. For example, people that planted cassava, their cassava has been taken over by weed because they no longer go to farm to nurture their crops. Another example is the issue of stealing and robbing, if a farmer parks his motorcycle to work in the farm, before he or she comes back, the motorcycle would have been stolen by the headers, which means difficulty in transporting farm produce by such farmers. In the past, farmers do bring plantains, bananas, and other things home anytime they go farming. But now they buy these petty things at an expensive rate.”

Another informant highlighted that:

“It has led to loss of lives and properties; it has also led to food scarcity in the state. The conflict has led to food insecurity and also increase the poverty level of the State. For example, I have a friend, who collected a loan from the bank to enhance his farming activities, the sum of this money is huge, after planting and taking care of the crops, when it was time for harvesting, the herders destroyed all his produce putting him into debt the guy has not been able to repay his loan and also the large acres of lands that has been destroyed by these criminals has contributed to food insecurity. The conflict has also led to unemployment as people no longer go to farm anymore”

Further on how the conflict as affected the lives of the people, the question of its effect on food production was asked and one of the informants said:

“the State is agriculturally buoyant before but now, there’s no more food in the state for example; this is maize season, we’re supposed to be eating maize abundantly now but there’s no maize in abundance anymore.

The finding also shows the contribution of the government towards resolving the conflict between herders and the farmers and it shows that the government has not been active in resolving the issue hence, the incessant killing continue by the marauders called herdsmen. This point is well captured in one of the informants’ statements where he said:

“The conflict is reoccurring because of Neglect by the government. The government are doing nothing about it. I don’t see anything done by the government but to support them (the herders)”.

Conclusion

Farmer–herder conflict has been ongoing in Ekiti for more than half a decade. This menace, we must note, has succeeded in slowing, retarding and even stopping some major economic activities in Ikole and Ekiti at large. The loss of lives and properties, reduction in agricultural produce, unemployment, loss of revenue etc. has unleashed fear animosity and hatred among the people, retarded the economic development of the state, has increased the rural-urban migration, and also led to an increase in the poverty and malnutrition level of the state. Therefore, it requires our collective efforts to find a lasting solution to this problem. Nigeria is fast losing its agrarian prowess both as a meat producer and in terms of arable crops. The farmers/herdsmen clashes are beginning to erode the people's passion for agriculturally productive activities.

The nature of the conflict in the study area can be attributed to the fight over scarce arable lands and water. The scarcity increases every dry season due to the migration of herders and other farmers to the area. Competition over land and water becomes inevitable and eventually spark the conflict. Nevertheless, other causes of the conflict from the findings include; destruction of crops and killing of cattle.

Food is an important aspect of man’s life because it helps to support the growth and well-being of man. The farmers-herdsmen conflict remains a major food security threat especially in Nigeria with her large population. The findings of this study have shown that farmers-herdsmen conflicts account for decline in food production. It’s better to curb it now than later when the implications of the conflict could lead to severe food insecurity.

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