

The Dynamics of Climate Change: From Natural Resource Depletion to Farmers- Pastoralist-Herders Violent Conflict in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study adopted a survey research design and descriptive-analytic strategy to analyze qualitative and quantitative data generated. With special attention in Benue State Nigeria, the research examines the contribution of government intervention policies on the farmer's and herder's conflict to climate change adaptability. A total of Two hundred and twenty questionnaires were distributed to respondents, and 215 representing (90%) were returned valid. While Twenty (20) respondents were selected for the In-depth Interviews among traditional rulers, Deputy Directors, and Permanent Secretaries from relevant Federal and State ministries. The findings revealed that incessant violent conflict between herders and farmers is a consequence of poor natural resource governance because all government interventions failed to take cognizance of the effects of climate change and rapid natural resource depletion across the country. The study concludes that the demarcation of cattle routes as advocated by the government is outdated because of the increase in the population of humans, livestock, and agricultural activities. It suggests that the federal government should robustly adopt a holistic campaign that will encourage private ranching

Keywords: Climate change; natural resources, violent conflict; herders, farmers

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I. Introduction

Pastoral herders and farmers conflict in sub-Saharan Africa is not a recent phenomenon but it has become an issue of great concern now than ever before because of the wanton carnage, instability, and humanitarian crisis it generates across boundaries¹ (Brottem, 2021, Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018). The historical mutual relationship that characterizes herders and farmers' existence has disappeared, while mistrust and vicious cycle of violence and reprisal attack has become prominent (Adomako, 2019; Agyemang, 2017). From central Mali to Burkina Faso, Ghana; Central African Republic; Somali; Sudan, and Nigeria the narrative has remained the same (Heidelberg, 2017; Olaniyan, Francis, & Uzodike, 2015).

In contemporary times, almost in all the federating states and the geopolitical zones of the Nigeria, the interaction which exists between herders and farmers has been everything but peaceful. The consequences of these clashes over the decades are colossally preponderant on citizens' rights, lives, safety, development; peaceful co-existence, and national unity (Punch Newspaper, 2018; Maina, 2020). The rate of destruction and fatalities from the escalation of farmer-herder violence can only be compared with that of the Boko Haram insurgency (Brettem, 2020). Similarly reports from the International Crisis Group, (ICG, 2019) and Global Index (GI; 2019), revealed that in the first quarter of 2018, about 35,325 deaths were recorded, while more than 300,000 persons have been internally displaced within the north central region.

A complex combination of ecological and demographic reasons is driving the increase in the intensity and frequency of confrontations between herders and farmers in Nigeria. Desertification, in particular, as a result of weather changes and population growth, as well as agricultural expansion and rural banditry, and the skirmish over grazing land and limited resources which in many years caused persistent and rising violent conflicts in terms of frequency, intensity, and geographic scope (Brottem, 2020; Ohlsson, 1999; Ugwumba, 2018). Expectedly, with the reduction of suitable lands for subsistence farming because of increasing urbanization, climatic variability, and environmental degradation especially along the Lake Chad basin altering the migratory pattern of the pastoralist, there is intensified unhealthy competition between herdsman and farmers – resulting in violent confrontations, deaths; forced displacement and the destruction of other means of livelihood (Mercy Corps, 2015, Sunday, 2013). This has cumulated not only to fierce rivalry over natural resources but increased apprehension and uneasy relationship between the two agriculturalists (Ejigu, 2009; Kwaja, et.al, 2017; Mazo, 2010). It is within this narrative that this research examines the contribution and relevance of government policies and programmes to the escalation of the conflict between herders and farmers in most of Nigeria.

Statement of the Research Problem

Over the years, different policies and political solutions have been presented to the country for the resolution of the pastoral herders and farmers' violent conflicts; yet the conflict is escalating in high intensity. Most of the policy interventions by the state and federal governments are vehemently resisted and rejected based on some subjective arguments, thereby frustrating government effort to achieve sustainable peace between the two groups. Hence the collateral damage and unbridled human and material carnage estimated into millions of Naira have continued unabated (Okeke, 2014; Olaniyan et al., 2015; Olayoku, 2014); while the connection between these various policies and conflict escalation remains nonetheless unclear.

This study interrogates various government policy interventions and their contribution to peace, stability, or escalation of violence within the north-central region and beyond. Its objectives are (1) to examine the past and present policy intervention policies to address the farmers' and herder's conflict in Nigeria, (2) to interrogate the significant contribution of the intervention policies to peace and security or escalation of the violence, (3) to examine the significant ways the policies have affected the herders' and farmer's relationship in some states especially Benue state, and (4) to investigate reasons both parties resist government intervention policies.

The identified gap is that mainstream studies mostly focused on the causes and economic implications of herders and farmers in Nigeria which have been attributed to natural resources scarcity and contestation occasioned by environmental factors of climate change which puts great pressure on the land. However, much has not been done to scrutinize the significant contribution of the government intervention policies in the de-escalating and unintended escalation of the conflict between the herdsman and farmers in some parts of the federation. The contribution of this study to the body of knowledge is that it will bring to fore some of the previous and present government approaches both at the state and federal levels that have encouraged inequality and unequal access to farmers and herders needs for land and water resources and as such lack a long-term capacity to provide a lasting solution to the conflict as it relates to natural resource depletion.

Conceptual and Theoretical framework

It is germane to clarify some of the basic concepts that form the keywords of this study, such words are 'conflict' and 'pastoralist herders' and climate change before engaging in the extensive issue of herders and farmers conflict in Nigeria.

Conflict is a common feature of human interaction and interdependency. It can manifest as a result of economic disparity, and manipulation of social variation, mostly when parties professed disagreement of interest or a belief that their current desires cannot be achieved contemporaneously (Ibeh, 2019). Conflict does not exist in a vacuum; it occurs between individuals and among groups of individuals. Coser (1956:8) posits that “conflict is a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources, in which the aims of the opponents are not only to achieve their goals but to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals”.

Herders and farmers in Nigeria reflect Coser's (1956) definition of conflict that arises because of struggle over scarce resources and collaborates Adetoye and Omilusi's (2015) assertion that conflict involves struggle and rivalry for objects to which groups of people or individuals attach importance. In recent times, the concern of the two parties (herders and farmers) are not about the incongruities and clashes over access to and control, and use of, natural resources, but how to neutralize their opponents permanently and have unhindered access to the land and water which are very essential for their economic survival (Nohlen Schltzed, 2015; Adekunle & Adisa, 2010).

Pastoralism is a part of agriculture that involves the breeding and rearing of animals such as goats, sheep, and cattle. According to Swift (cited in Agyemang, 2017), pastoralist herders can be regarded as

domestic animal's custodians who acquire a greater percentage of their total gross earnings from mobile livestock rearing in a traditional communal pasture. Many ethnic groups across the globe engage in pastoralism, but the Fulani's are the predominant in pastoral activities (Maina, 2020). Fulani herdsmen are more visible in Africa's Sahel region. These regions are typified by unpredictable rainfall and the resulting inconsistencies in the spatial and temporal distribution of water supplies and animal grazing. While Farmers in Nigeria on the other hand are mostly traditional class of peasants who are either labourers or owners of small farms, who till the ground and engage in small-scale farming for subsistence as well as for cash sale in the market. The farmers and herders historically complemented one another in productive terms (Azeez, et. al., 2015). This is done through monetary transactions for grain and animal products (e.g., milk, cheese, etc.), animal power, crop residue as animal feed, and manure for soil fertility (Dugué, Vall; Lecomte; Klein & Rollin 2004). They also depended on natural resources such as land for crops farming and folders for herds, grazing fields, and also water for irrigation and the cattle, so there is a symbiotic relationship between them as a result of sharing common natural resources which makes the conflict between them inevitable.

Theoretical Perspective

Scholars have adduced many theories to expound on the influence of natural resources in conflict. There are two dominant theories, on one hand, it is the view as natural resource conflict from a scarcity perspective (often referred to as the neo-Malthusian), and on the other, on the other hand, denotes plenty. Rapid population growth, environmental degradation, resource depletion, and unequal access to resources, according to neo-Malthusians theorists, worsen poverty and income inequality in many of the world's least developed countries. These deprivations are easily translated into grievances, increasing the risks of rebellion and societal conflict (Colin, 2006). Local environmental degradation can cause internal conflicts, such as when cows contaminate the major freshwater source or undermine farmers' livelihoods.

So also when cattle are rustled, killed or grazing routes encroached by farmers. Ethnic clashes as is the case in many parts of the farming communities can occur when population migration increases demand for scarce resources such as water or land. Elaborating Malthus's view, Baechler, Percival, Homer-Dixon and Gleditsch (1998) argue that environmental resource scarcity causes conflict because of insufficient supply, and uneven distribution of available natural resources compared to the demand and usage. The quest by individuals or groups to have an adequate share of the available resources according to their needs and the failure to meet the demand may lead to unhealthy competition which may become violent, resulting in environmental destruction, hunger, and deprivation.

From the eco-violent/ resource scarcity theory, three salient fundamental issues come to the fore: supply-induced scarcity, demand-induced scarcity, and structural scarcity (Homer-Dixon, 1994). Supply-induced scarcity occurs where there is the rapid depletion of natural resources more than the rate of replenishment, while demand-induced scarcity emerges as a result of population explosion, structural scarcity arises as a result of inequitable resource distribution and the concentration of resources in a few hands, neglecting the rest of the population who suffers from resource scarcity. (Homer-Dixon, 1999, Olaniyan, Francis, & Uzodike, 2015). Structural scarcity more often is caused by discriminatory government policies which put the control of strategic renewable resources in the hands of a single group to the disadvantage of other resource-dependent individuals, groups and communities that can become marginalized. This is evident in the laws prohibiting open grazing in most states of Nigeria such as Benue, Taraba, Ekiti, and Oyo without alternative provisions for the herders. It is also responsible for the rejection of some of the government policies such as Cattle Colony, Grazing Reserve area, and Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) which was perceived as a means of transferring land to the Fulani migrates to the detriment of farmers who claim land ownership.

Vasseh (cited in Keghku & Fanafa 2019) asserts that when resources are unevenly distributed or are scarce, the struggle over the possession results in conflict. Generally, conflict over natural resources manifests over issues concerning who should have authority and control regarding resources, and who will be able to make decisions about their allocation, benefit-sharing, administration, and pace of usage (Agyemang, 2017). The crisis between herders and farmers in Nigeria is fueled by land shortages and competition between farmers and Fulani herdsmen to ensure their survival in the area, according to the hypothesis.

Land scarcity is a result of environmental degradation and limited ecological space, population explosions of humans and animals, and resource depletion. Therefore, the farmers need the land for cultivation, while the herdsmen need the land for grazing and rearing of cattle, while farmers lay legitimate claim to arable land as an ancestral heritage for farming, the pastoralist herders argue that they have the right of access to forage as bequeathed by nature.

II. Review of Previous Studies

Maina (2020) in his work titled the federal government of Nigeria's Rural Area, Policy, the demystification of the elite's theory, suggests the reasons behind the citizens' uproar and rejection which resulted in government suspension of the federal government proposed Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) policy. This according to Maian is at variance with the fundamental thrust of elite's theory which postulates the elites determine laws, policies, and agenda of the state, and also determine who gets what, how when, where and why. The proposed RUGA was aimed at addressing the incessant violent behaviour between herders and farmers in Nigeria, unfortunately, the majority of the citizens rejected the policy based on its alleged threat to agrarian farmers, secularism, and security of the nation. The agitation against the RUGA policy exposed how ineffective the federal government machinery is in the area of effective strategic communication with the public on the government programme. The opportunity for a laudable programme that would have laid a firm platform for sustainable peace between the pastoralist herders and the agrarian farmers were sacrificed on the premise of ethnic grievance, chauvinism, and elite manipulation of the masses was lost.

Ndubuisi (2018) analyzed conflicts between herdsman and farmers in Nigeria, with attention to the causes, socio-religious and political effects on national development. The study indicates a high level of carnage in human and material resources, an unimaginable number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's) who are dislocated from homes. It concludes that the situation has hampered development and consequently, threatened the peace and security of the country as an indivisible geographical entity. The herders' and farmers' violent action has put more strain on the disjointed ethnic diversity of the nation because of deficiency of political will by the government to punish culprits as the law stipulated.

In a related manner, Anastasia (2018) in her study on the structural and processual factors which contribute to the increasing farmer herders' conflict in the Ukpabi-Nimbo community of Enugu state, with the aid of the qualitative method of data collection revealed that there is no single factor that can be pointed out as the causes rather a multifaceted issues, ranging from climate change to resource depletion; lack of freshwater to effects of cattle rustlers among others. The outcome of Anastasia's work suggests that the resource conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria has another latent issue behind the conflict, such as fear confiscation of land by the herders and an alleged attempt to change the demographic composition of some states of the federation by deliberately making the Fulani's a dominant ethnic group.

Lere, Ola, and Temitope (2017) on a study titled Climate change, pastoral migration, resource governance, and security: "the Grazing Bill solution to the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria". It concludes that climate change is a fact and has significant effects on human security through its antagonistic effects on pastoral livelihoods; it contends that migration and conflict go beyond this causal narrative. The combination of socio-historical factors provides a backdrop to the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria in the face of a continuous decline in the natural resource base and increasing growing contention for land and its related resources.

It is obvious from Lere et. -al. (2017) perspective that the increase in the claim of rightful ownership of land by farmers as a heritage bequeathed from their ancestors and the counterclaim of right to access natural resources endowed by nature complicates the conflict, and not necessarily because of depletion. This has been the case in Nigeria as the herders claim the right to settle and also graze where ever they want without permission.

Eje et al. (2017) investigated the pattern and consequences of farmer-herder conflicts in the Riyom local government area of Plateau State, Nigeria. According to the findings, conflicts between herders and farmers are caused by several factors, including damage to crops by cattle, land encroachment by farmers, inadequate grazing reserves, lack of access to the water point and pollution of water points, killing of stray cattle, indiscriminate bush burning, cattle rustling, non-adherence to rules and regulations that guide forest reserves. It further established that these conflicts have far-reaching effects on the people and polity such as destruction of farms, loss of cattle and loss of crop yield, and destruction of places of worship, destruction of houses, schools, health care facilities, and strained relationships and loss of trust, loss of lives.

From the literature examined, it is obvious that scholars have examined the issue of herders and farmers extensively in Nigeria generally and the North-central of the country in particular and concludes that the causes of the conflicted relationship between the two groups are multifaceted. As such no single factor can dominantly be said to be the real cause of the conflict rather the factors are interwoven with its associated consequences on social-economic development and human security. However, the relevance and unintended contribution of government inappropriate policies in the escalation of the conflict have not received adequate attention.

III. Research Methodology

Study Design, Setting, Study Frame, and Sample Size

This study adopted a survey research design and utilizes a qualitative and quantitative source of data, which involves the use of questionnaires, In-depth interviews (IDI), and Key Informant Interviews to collect

data about people and their preferences, thoughts, and behaviours in a systematic manner. The primary data was obtained through Key Informant Interviews (KII), and In-depth Interviews of the targeted audience and the administration of semi-structured and open-ended questionnaires to respondents, while secondary data were generated from scholarly journals, books, and government policy papers that are relevant to enhance the credibility of the study.

The setting of the study is the entire country of Nigeria with special emphasis on Benue and Abuja. In Benue state, communities such as Abugbe, Okoklo, Ogwule, Ocholoyan in Agatu local government area are the main area of study. Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory was included in the study because it is the city of power of the nation, within it, is the residence of most of the Key Informants who are government officials in the Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development, lands, and water resources who are not only knowledgeable in the issue under study but are involved in the policy implementation of some of the programme.

Authorization to engage the communities selected for the study was obtained through a formal letter to the Commissioner of Police Benue State and copied to the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of the Agatu Local Government Area, and some paramount rulers specifying the objective of the study. Furthermore, before conducting the interviews, we obtained informed consent from our respondents, the state executives of the Cattle Breeders Association and the Village Heads of the communities, as well as those from the Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Water Resources, and Ministry of Lands, with a clear explanation of the study's goal. To avoid being prejudiced, we emphasized before our respondents that we did not want any details that might compromise the fragile peace that exists between the two groups under study. Also, respondents were assured of their privacy as the work is purely for academic purposes.

Both primary and secondary sources methods of data collection were utilized. The primary sources were oral interviews, of which few were collected through a telephone conversation with the interviewees in some parts of Benue State especially the Agatu local government Area because of the volatile nature of the area as at the time of the study, to obtain first-hand information on their knowledge of the subject matter. The interview schedule specifically targeted village heads, traditional rulers and some eminent indigenes of the affected communities, state representatives of cattle herders, and farmers, and some government functionaries from the Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development, Environment, and the Department of Livestock development both at the state and federal level.

The emphasis is not on the peasant farmers and field herders who are directly the victims of violence from the study because the cardinal focus of the work is on the interrogation of government policies. However, representatives of farmers and herders who are educated enlightened and understand various government interventions policies both from the state and federal level were included in the survey. Also because of the volatile nature of some of the communities and emotions the topic raised among a few members of the communities during the pilot study especially when interacting with people who lost their loved ones and property during the crisis. Textbooks, journal articles, encyclopaedias, newspapers, magazines, periodicals, reports, and Internet items were among the secondary sources. These materials aided the researchers in conducting a qualitative examination of the issues at hand.

IV. Sample Size

The sample size for the study is 220 persons. Out of this group, 12 persons fall within the targeted audience for the interview, while eight (8) persons served as Key informants (KII). By Key Informants, we mean people that have deep knowledge and understanding of the issue under study and are willing to help clarify, collaborate or dispute certain claims of interest that can enhance the study in the course of the investigation or interviews. Purposively, two (2) traditional rulers each were selected from Abugbe, Ogwule, and Ocholoyan communities in Agatu local government area of Benue State and Six (6) representatives of State Executives of MYETTI Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) were selected for the In-depth Interview (IDI). Furthermore, two hundred and twenty (220) questionnaires were administered to respondents, 215 representing 98% were correctly filled and returned.

Key Informant Interview was held with eight (8) persons, comprising of four (4) Permanent Secretaries, one each from Benue State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Ministry of Water Resource and Environment, and Ministry of Rural Development and Cooperative, and four (4) Deputy Directors from the federal Ministry of Environment, Water Resource, Agriculture, and Rural Development in the state.

V. Analytical Method

Two strata of analytical techniques were adopted for the study. First, Unified Data Analytic Strategy (UDAS) was applied for the analysis of the qualitative data. This encompasses consensual qualitative research, utilizing and combining different data analytical tools, methods, and techniques (Hill, 2012; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997), and the grounded theory technique of Glaser and Strauss (1967), and the analytic cycle of Schatzman and Straus (1973).

According to Hill (2012), there are four processes to data analysis in consensual qualitative research: first, block data from transcripts; second, open code the blocks to produce an initial list of content domains; third, condense the domains into key concepts; and fourth, conduct a cross-analysis. This study adopted second, third and fourth steps, which involves a process of classifying text data segments into a set of codes (concepts), categories (constructs), and relationships. In other words, the qualitative gathered from the series of key informants and in-depth interviews were coded, presented and analyzed using content analytical tools. Second, for the quantitative data generated from the questionnaires, descriptive analysis aided by univariate tables of simple frequencies and percentages were used to describe respondents' socio-economic characteristics and other variables considered significant to this study.

[Table 1 here]:

Table 1 above indicates that 174 respondents representing 80.9% are male, while 41 respondents representing 19.1% are females that participated in filling copies of the questionnaires on the contribution of climate change to the conflict between herders' and farmers' and the relevance of government policies and programme to climate change adaptability, Also the table indicates that greater number of the respondents 101 (47.0 %) fall within the age range of and 30- 40 years. Following this category are those within the age range of 41-50 years 68 (31.6 %); while 51 and above constitute 46 (21.4%). More specifically, this means that a majority of 169(78.6%) of the respondents were within the age range of 30 to 50 years and energetic, these groups form the active and virile human resources of the nation.

Furthermore, the educational qualification of respondents as contained in Table 1 above reveals that only 35 (16%) of the respondents have a postgraduate degree, 82(38.0) had a first degree or its equivalent, while those who attend post-primary education or secondary school were 79 (37.0 %), and 19 (9.0%) of the respondents had attended primary school and none on informal education. The implication of these figures on the educational attainment of the respondents is that all of them can read and write, and largely understands the importance of the issue under investigation not only as explained by the researcher, and are knowledgeable on it, mostly the civil servants that constitute the bulk of the respondents. Finally, Table 1 above also indicates the occupation or profession of the respondents, 32 respondents representing 15.0% of the total participants are traders, 121 representing 56.2% are civil servants, while 14 respondents representing 7.0% and 48 respondents representing 22.3% are artisans, and agriculturists respectively. We decided to lump both herders and farmers together as agriculturists because they are not the direct focus of this study.

[Table: 2 here]

Table 2 above shows the respondent's preferences on the research questions which guided the study. Regarding the question of whether there are previous government policies and programmes to address herders and farmers conflict in Nigeria, 207 respondents representing 96.3% say "Yes" there are policies and programmes, 8(3.7%) respondents say "No". This implies that 3.7% of the respondents are not aware of previous policies, and government efforts to resolve or address the conflict between herders and farmers in Nigeria.

[Table: 3 here]

Table 3 above indicates the majority of the participants 181(85%) say "No" that government intervention programs and policies have no significant contribution to climate adaptability, while 34 participants representing 15.8% of the respondents say "Yes" it has contributed significantly to climate change adaptability.

[Table 4: here]

Furthermore, Table 4 above revealed that 191 respondents representing 88.8% say "No" that government intervention policies have not contributed significantly to the replenishment of natural resources through tree planting nor did it result in the establishment of new forest reserves to replenish the depleting natural resources. 24 participants representing 11.2% of the total respondents say "Yes" it has increased the rate of tree planting to replenish lost natural resources.

[Table 5: here]

On the effect of government intervention policies on the relationship between the herders and farmers Table 5 above indicates that 121(56.3%) and 56(26.0%) respondents "Strongly Agree" and "Agreed" respectively that government policies have heightened the perception of discrimination and injustice between the herders and farmers, while 17(7.9) and 21(9.8%) respondents are of the view "Disagreed and Strongly disagreed" respectively that government intervention policies have heightened perception of discrimination and injustice among the herders, farmers and some of the host communities. In other words, a combined number of 176 representing 82.3% of the respondents are of the view that government policies have heightened the perception of discrimination and injustice among the people hence the intractable nature of the conflict in recent times. Also, 17(7.9%) of the respondents disagreed that government policies have a heightened perception of discrimination and injustice, while 21 participants representing 9.8% strongly disagree that government policies heightened perception of discrimination and injustice.

[Table 6: here]

Furthermore, data presented in Table 6 indicates that 13 respondents (6.0%), and 12 (5.6%) of the respondent "Strongly Agreed" and "Agreed" that government policies have enhanced cooperation between herders and farmers in many states of the federation, while 89(41.4%) and 101(47.0%) respondents "Disagreed" and "Strongly Disagreed" respectively that government intervention policies enhanced cooperation between herders and farmers.

This section presents views of the respondents on the questions the study tends to provide an answer to, which includes what are the past and present policies and programmes to address farmers and herders' conflicts. Is there evidence of whether government policies contribute to the escalation or de-escalation of the conflict between herders and farmers? How have the intervention policies addressed the effects of climate change, what are the efforts of the government on human capacity building to ensure that herders embrace ranching, and finally why are the intervention policies rejected by both conflicting parties?

The results and findings of this study as shown in table 1 indicate that numerous policies and programmes were initiated by the government to address the conflict. This result was corroborated by some of the responses from the in-depth interview of the key informants.

One of the respondents from the State Ministry of Water Resources and Environment who subscribes to the fact that there are policies by the government to address the farmers and herders' conflict by previous administration asserts that grazing reserves were established explained thus:

There are grazing reserves established by the government during the then northern region government, but the landowners have reclaimed their lands, because of the increase in agricultural activities, some areas have been used to establish healthcare centres and General hospitals, and even higher institutions (August 11th, 2020).

He further asserts:

History and some verifiable documents show that grazing routes and reserves have been in existence before the arrival of the British Colonial administration. It was established by the Fulani's after the conquest of the north, but the formal documentation, gazette, and proper demarcation of grazing land and cattle routes from farmland were done by the colonial administration in the 1940s. (August 11th, 2020)

The result from the questionnaires administered also reflects the responses on some of the interviews, another respondent, village head from Abugbe in the Agatu Local government area avers thus:

The former Governor of Benue State in the second Republic Late Governor Ape Aku constructed a ranch in the state, with nearly all the facilities, installed, but successive administrations could not maintain it, or even leverage on that to build more in the state. We would not have been in this complete mess of senseless killings and destruction of property. (August 4th, 2020)

Similarly, another of our Key Informant from the Ogwule community in Agatu Benue State affirms that:

The government in the first republic carved out grazing routes and even built some grazing reserves exclusively for Fulani migrant herders to settle in some parts of the then northern region. The herders are meant to live inside the settlement, schools, mosques, dams, veterinary services and electricity are to be provided inside the grazing reserves, but political instability and policy inconsistency that characterized the first republic and, frequent change of government through military coup de-tat imparted negatively on the program. (August 2020).

On the above question on whether government intervention policy contributed significantly to the replenishment of natural resources through tree planting and opening of new forest reserve one of the respondents, an ex-leader of MACBAN asserts:

Both the federal and state government policies past and present have not incorporated the issue of climate change into livestock development plans, no tree planting, no grass planting. No policies to restrict the cutting of trees for firewood, no adequate measures to stop desert encroachment. The only plan is to accommodate herders from other countries in Nigeria.

One of the female respondents from the state Ministry of Rural Development and Cooperative stated that:
The situation today is so bad that even vast green and arable environments are losing biodiversity and desertifying because of cattle movement and overgrazing. The periodic burning of hectares of tropical forests and grassland, feeding hundreds of thousands of cattle with grain that should be feeding humans, Agriculture activities are leading to widespread desertification.

On the effect of government intervention policies on the relationship between the herders and farmers a Key Informant respondent from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture Abuja asserts thus:

The issue is that this entire program is focused on the resettlement of the Fulani herders, the residents are not considered. Government is only interested to build an exclusive facility for these herders at the detriment of the landowners. It cannot work because it will be an injustice to take one's land and transfer it to others to take care of their private businesses.

The question which sought to know whether there is evidence that government intervention policies have contributed to the escalation or de-escalation of the conflict or has enhanced cooperation between herders and farmers in the state, results indicates that government intervention policies according to data result have increased hostility between herders and farmers. This finding was reaffirmed by a village Head from Agatu in a telephone conversation stated that:

When we are younger the herdsmen used to visit our farms after the harvesting of crops they will send delegates in advance to inform us of their coming, and even tell us how many months they intend to stay. We do welcome them as partners because farmers need the dungs of the cattle; even the cattle clear the thick bushes through constant grazing. The herders are not permanent residence in our communities; they stayed far inside the bushes, but come out periodically to buy their needs. I don't know any of the grazing routes that they talk about these days. All I knew is that if it is during farming seasons when they are going back, they use in between boundaries of farms without damaging our crops. (July, 4th 2020)

On the reasons both parties (herders and farmers) resist government intervention policies, an ex-leader of MACBAN interview in Benue state opines:

In all honesty, the pastoralists are not against the law, but for it to be acceptable and implementable; several aspects of it need to be corrected. It must be fair to all because we are all Nigeria. A lot needs to be amended for it to work. For instance, where are the pastoralists supposed to keep their cattle before we acquire land for ranching within the limited window period before the implementation of the law started? (August, 18th 2020)

Furthermore, he avers that:

In most of these laws as major stakeholders, Miyetti Allah was supposed to have input, unfortunately, we were not invited for all the public hearings held before the signing of the bill; "thus, we could not contribute," From all indications the law was meant to witch hunt herders in this part of the country. But I tell you, it won't work the way they planned it (August, 18th, 2021).

Another respondent reaffirms the above assertion thus:

From what we are told, Ruga, Graze Reserve, Cattle are the same, but the government behaves as if they are different from each other. But let them open one, equipped and operate some at least two years, we will understudy it and maybe individually, or collectively we will establish our own. But the government should provide land, access roads; and other necessary amenities to make it thrive (July, 10th, 2020).

In a similar vein, an Assistant Director in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development stated:
All the government policies lack bottom to top approach in the decision-making process and implementation of the projects. There is little or no input from the farmers and herders. So there is no sense of ownership among them, the two antagonist group views it as Government Issue, or that government is working in favour of one group against the other. Our submission has been to engage the two groups and their representative in the discussion of what they want, before anything, but you know everything in Nigeria(August, 6th 2021).

VI. Discussion

One of the recurrent issues our analysis revealed is that the federal government of Nigeria and the state government affected by the herders and farmers conflict have undertaken numerous intervention policies to mitigate such conflict in the country. Among the policies at the federal level are the Grazing Area and Cattle Routes (GANCR) which was introduced in the 1940s by the colonial administration, the establishment of the National Grazing Reserve Bill 2016; and the proposed Cattle Ranching System 2018; the cattle colony bill, and the Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) policy. The result of this study is inconsonant with some other scholars' assertion that the issue of grazing reserves in Nigeria was initiated before the arrival of the British colonial administration by the Fulani in most parts of the north (see Audu, 2013; Bako & Ingawa, 1988; ICG, 2017). This implies that effort has been made previously to ensure peaceful coexistence between herders and farmers during the colonial days. Thus, with the increasing intensity of the farmer-herders conflict in recent times, the necessity to reenact laws that would guide the day-to-day interactions between these two classes has become more expedient.

The Bill which has been suspended according to the proponents would have empowered the Commission to acquire land in any part of the country to establish grazing reserves and demarcate cattle routes. However, this aspect to acquire land is tantamount to violation of the subsisting Land Use Act and traditional means of landholding if enacted (The Peace and Security Forum, 2017; Guilbert, 2016). As a result of its contradiction with the existing Land Use Act, the bill was resisted by most legislators from the southern part of the country based on its inconsistency with the relevant portion of Nigeria's constitution which entrusted the issue of land to the state Governors.

Other proposed programme and strategies include the Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlements for Fulani herdsmen, which were proposed by the Buhari administration, Cattle colony, and the Ranching Option all these are the same with a different name, unfortunately, lack of political will, ethnic sentiments, and resistance both from herders and farmers hindered their implementation (Sayedi & Abdullahi, 2019; Waheed, Abiola, Nzor, & Nda-Isaiah, 2019).

On the significant unintended contribution of the intervention policies to escalation or de-escalation of the conflict in Nigeria, this study reveals that the herders' and farmers' conflict has deteriorated and has not only stressed, but have strained the security architecture of the country. The crisis has claimed more lives than the Boko Haram insurgency, for instance, from January 2017 to April 2018, an estimated 35,325 people were killed, while more than 300,000 persons were internally displaced (ICG, 2019; GI, 2019). In other words, government policies rather than deescalate the crisis escalate it the more. Examples abound in the anti-open grazing law in Benue and Taraba States. Corroborating the finding of this study, Adetula (2019), believed that herders were formerly known to cause havoc in specific Nigerian villages, but in recent times, the rate at which they commit these crimes has now escalated enormously. This endangers the nation's search for peace, security, and unity as a single geographical entity.

Furthermore, the current study reveals that some of the intervention policies have negatively affected the symbiotic relationship which previously existed between herders and farmers. For instance, in Benue state, the enactment of the anti-grazing law aggravated the tension and hostility between the two groups which also caused more deaths. Report from IFRA-Nigeria (2014) confirms that violent deaths as a result of skirmishes between herdsmen and farmers accounted for about 68 percent of deaths across north-central Nigeria (786 of 1,150). This trend of fatal conflict has since spread to the eastern part of the country, with a total of 710 Nigerians killed by Fulani herdsmen over ten months in 2015-16 (Mamah & Ndujihe, 2016).

The study further revealed the reason both the herders and farmers have vehemently refused and resisted some of the government policies. In one of the interviews, a community leader insisted that the motive behind the RUGA and Cattle Colony policy is to forcibly collect dispose of the indigenes of their lands and hand it over to migrant herders from across Africa. This was also the perception of the Benue State Governor Samuel Ortom who states in an interview with Guardian Newspaper of March 27 (2021) that the issue in contention is land, which the Fulani's want to take forceful from the owners of Benue state. The Governor further asserts that the aim is to change the demographic composition of our state. Yusuf (2019) corroborated the governor's assertion that the primary beneficiaries of the RUGA when fully implemented will be the pastoralist non-resident because when 1500 hectares of land are acquired in each state, there will be an increase in the Fulani population in all the States. In other words, the perception and fear (real or imagined) that the motives behind the intervention policies are to acquire land for migrant herders contributed to the agitations against the policy.

On the other hand, the herders are of the view that the government of most of the states that enacted laws against open grazing is to hinder the herders' access to grazing land. This is evident in some of the reactions from the Myetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBA) representatives.

Our submission has been to engage the representatives of the two groups in the discussion of what they want, before rolling out policy and program. If the two warring groups are properly educated or enlightened on some

of the merits of government policies they will embrace both the ranching and cattle colony. However, the non-incorporation of their ideas has contributed to the failures and outright rejection of the intervention policy.

VII. Conclusion

This research examines the past and present policy interventions of the Nigerian government, both the federal and the affected states on the farmers-herders conflict, and the significant ways the policies have contributed to the de-escalation and escalation of the conflict, how it affected the herders and farmers relationship in some states especially Benue state, and the reasons both parties resisted government intervention policies.

With special attention on Benue state and some communities in Agatu local government area, the study identified some laudable programs that would have forestalled the incessant skirmishes between herders and farmers but were neglected. Such a program as the Grazing Reserves Law of 1965 program was neglected by successive governments after the first republic government that promulgated the law. It further revealed how resource scarcity exacerbated by climate change contributes to changes in migration patterns, resource struggle, and conflict between rural farmers and migrant herders in the study areas, bringing to the fore the implications of bad resource governance to the broader issues of security in Nigeria.

The finding indicates the policies have created more problems than they have solved them. The mistrust and violent attitude between the herders and farmers have escalated in frequency and the density of the carnage. Also, it has led both farmers and herders at different times to vehemently resist some of the government policies at the state and federal levels. This is because all the programs lack inputs from the end-users mostly the herders, there is hardly any proper and wider consultation before announcing policy options, as a result, there are misconceptions and contradictions on the sincerity of the government to tackle the issue holistically.

VIII. Recommendation

Based on the finding of this study, to achieve sustainable peace between herders and farmers in Nigeria, the study recommends that government should introduce ranching as practised in other nations of the world. Government should evolve an effective strategic communication measure to engage the two parties in enlightenment to assuage the farmer's fears of the government's plan of taking over their lands and the herders' fear of altering their nomadic culture.

Also, the Federal government should robustly adopt a holistic campaign that will encourage private ranching. Furthermore, there is a need for government to take decisive action to prosecute people that indulge in the destruction and killing no matter their ethnic and religious affiliation to stop impunity. Lastly, there is an urgent need to develop the rural Nigerian communities and as well engage the youths in meaningful employment. This will reduce the rate of violent aggression on the part of the youths on any little provocation. It will also minimize all-encompassing feelings of abandonment, deprivation, and frustration which fuel the embers of violence in Nigeria.

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Variables	N=215	%
Age		
30- 40 years	101	47.0
41 -50 years	68	31.6
51 and above	46	21.4
Sex		
Male	174	80.9
Female	41	19.1
Marital Status		
Married	133	61.9
Singles	72	33.5
*	10	4.6
Educational Status		
Postgraduate	35	16.0
Graduates	82	38.0
Secondary Education	79	37.0
Primary Education	19	9.0
No formal Education	-	--
Occupation		
Trader	32	15.0
Civil Servant	121	56.2

Artisan	14	7.0
Agriculturist	48	22.3

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 2

*RQ 1: Are there Policies and programme to address Herders and Farmer's Conflict * Response Cross tabulation*

Responses	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	207	96.3
No	8	3.7
Total	215	100

Source field survey, 2020

Table 3:

RQ2 Did the Intervention programme contributed significantly to Climate Change adaptability

	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	34	15.8
No	181	84.2
Total	215	100

Sources field survey 2020

Table 4:

*RQ3 Did government intervention policy contributed significantly to the replenishment of natural resources through tree planting and opening of new forest reserve * Response Cross tabulation*

	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	24	11.2
No	191	88.8

Sources field Survey 2020

Table 5

*RQ 4 Government Intervention Policies on the Relationship between Farmers and Herder's in Nigeria heightened the Perception of Discrimination and Injustice * Response Cross tabulation*

Responses	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly Agreed	121	56.3
Agreed	56	26.0
Disagreed	17	7.9
Strongly Disagreed	21	9.8
Total	215	100

Sources field Survey 2020

Table 6

*RQ 5 Government intervention policies have enhanced cooperation between herders and farmers in the State * Response Cross tabulation*

	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly Agreed	13	6.0
Agreed	12	5.6
Disagreed	89	41.4
Strong Disagreed	101	47.0
Total	215	100

Sources field Survey, 2020