



**INTERROGATING INTER-GROUP RELATIONS AND PEACEBUILDING AMONG
FARMERS AND HERDERS IN RURAL GRAZING AREAS IN BENUE STATE,
NIGERIA.**

By

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December 2024

DECLARATION

I, **Olawale James Gbadeyan** declare that:

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Student: Olawale James Gbadeyan

As the candidate's supervisor, I certify the above statement and have approved this thesis for submission.



Supervisor: Prof. Dorcas Ettang



Co-Supervisor: Dr. Lubna Nadvi

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to the Almighty God, the Author, Knower, and Finisher of my faith.
To whom I return all honour and glory

To the fond memories of my mother, Late Iyabo Gbadeyan, and Late brother, Olamide Gbadeyan; and my very dear siblings —Olajumoke, Omolola and Taiwo; to my lovely Children, Gold, Diamond and Obamide and my prized wife—Oluwabukola Olawale-James

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ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

AFD	Agence Française de Développement
AFAN	All Farmers Association in Nigeria
AOGL	Anti-Open Grazing Law
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
AFD	French Development Agency
GTI	Global Terrorism Index
IDI	In-Depth Interviews
ICG	International Crisis Group
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
ITCZ	Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone
LAP	Land Administration Project
LUA	Land Use Acts
LGAs	Local Government Areas
MACBAN	Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria
NEC	National Economic Council
NLTP	National Livestock Transformation Plan
NPC	Nigeria Population Census
PGA	Primary Grazing Areas
RUGA	Rural Grazing Areas
SNA	Social Network Analysis
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNOWAS	United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

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ABSTRACT

The prevalence of conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in Benue State, Nigeria, is primarily attributed to the destruction of farmers' crops by pastoralists' herds and the lack of resources. This is largely because most of the population in this Benue State are farmers, and most of the Fulani who migrated to the state are herders who need the land as pasture for their herds. The stiff competition over land use among crop farmers and herders often results in perennial clashes that probably rank Nigeria first globally regarding resource-use-based clashes between crop farmers and herders. Thus, the study assesses the intergroup relations and peacebuilding among farmers and herders in rural grazing areas in Benue State. Specifically, the study examines the nature and dynamics of herders and farmers' conflicts in rural grazing communities in Benue State; investigates the role of environmental changes, land, and water resources on the dynamics of conflicts and cooperative relations among herders and farmers in rural grazing communities in Benue State; examine the role of cultural, religious, and economic factors in inciting violence and building cooperation between herders and farmers in rural grazing areas and explore the peacebuilding resources for reconciling the warring herders and farmers in Benue State.

In solving the identified problems using qualitative research methodology of In-Depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussions to collect data from five purposively selected communities of Abinsi, Agila, Gbajimba, Igumale and Katsina-Ala. In all, 59 In-depth interviews and 5 FGDs were conducted to examine the intergroup relations and peacebuilding among farmers and herders in rural grazing areas of Benue state.

The findings reveal that simplifying farmer-herder disputes solely because of structural causes, environmental/climate change, and resource scarcity, as viewed through the lens of both the environmental scarcity/security school and farmer-herder perceptions, is far more intricate than often believed. Instead, a multitude of political, historical, social, and ecological elements contribute to the escalation of violent conflicts. Furthermore, the escalation of violent conflict occurs through a systematic process that includes social networks and a wide range of people who have influential roles in driving its development. It also reveals that open communication and dialogue among community leaders, religious figures, and respected elders can provide a platform for addressing grievances, sharing perspectives, and finding common ground.

The study recommends, among others, the necessity of an enhanced understanding and examination of the entirety of farmer-herder interactions. It suggests the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms and coordination mechanisms to facilitate information sharing, resource mobilization, and joint action. This includes creating partnerships to provide conflict resolution services, livelihood support programs, and infrastructure development projects that benefit both herders and farmers. In addition, it is necessary to adopt a grassroots peace strategy that originates at the local level and considers the viewpoints and needs of local communities. This approach should prioritize resolving the conflicts between farmers and herders rather than relying solely on the central government's directives.

Keywords: Rural Grazing Areas, Inter-group Relations, Herders'-Farmers Conflict, Resource Conflict, Peacebuilding

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

“The history of all hitherto society is the history of conflict” (Marx & Engels, 2002, p.79).

Conflicts over resources are among the gravest hazards to national security, public safety, and economic development in numerous developing nations. The principal catalyst for such violent conflict is the competition for resources, such as diamonds, land, and oil (Humphreys, 2005:522; Fearon, 2005:490; Angrist and Kugler, 2008:522; Lujala, 2009:62; Berman et al., 2017:1570). A few African nations, characterized by substantial pastoralist and agricultural populations, are rife with resource-based violence, particularly land-related disputes.

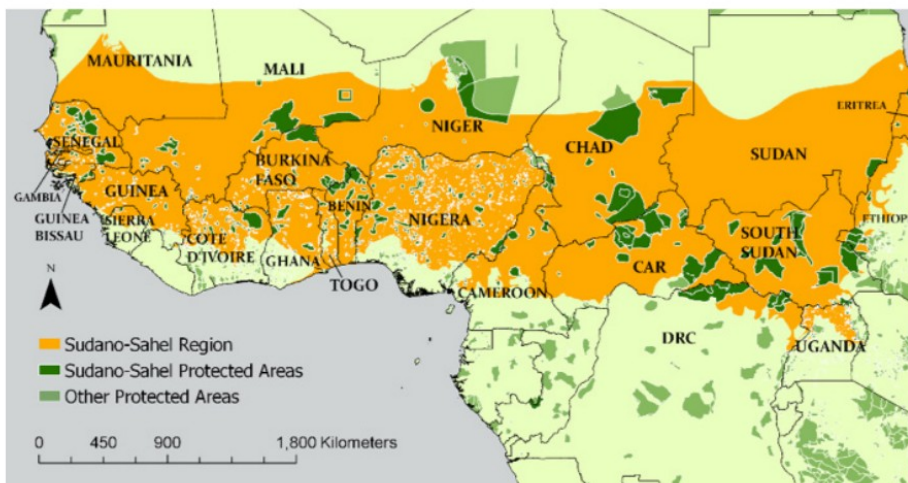
When the land in question has distinct meaning or value for the interested communities or groups, a significant number of these conflicts arise. For instance, pastoralists regard land as a divine bestowal and advocate against claiming ownership, citing the fact that pasture provides sustenance for their livestock and cows. Conversely, farmers perceive land as having been acquired from their predecessors. In contrast, turf and grass are pests that impede the development of crops. Distinguishing symbolic connotations ascribed to property give rise to disputes.

Notwithstanding the historical prevalence of political strife and substantial disputes concerning water and land resources in the Sudano-Sahel throughout the colonial and post-independence periods, these issues have only recently attracted considerable scrutiny on account of the continuous spread of violence, instability, and displacement in the region (Webb, 1995:400). Land and water resource disputes have a significant historical record of provoking political turmoil and producing substantial discord in the Sudano-Sahel during the colonial and post-independence eras. Nevertheless, these conflicts have recently regained prominence due to the escalating levels of violence, instability, and displacement in the region (Webb, 1995:400). In the Sudano-Sahel region, for instance, conflicts between pastoralists and cultivators have resulted from disputes over water and land resources. Divergent land use practices and competition for water sources and arable land frequently contribute to these disputes. Disputes regarding the availability of arable

land have, on occasion, escalated into violent confrontations, causing widespread displacement and loss of life.

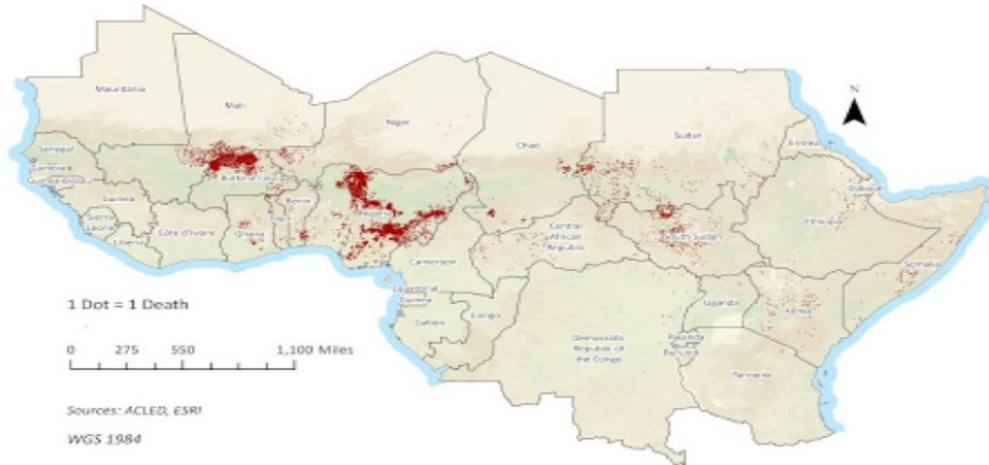
Multiple factors contribute to the conflicts concerning water and land resources in the Sudano-Sahel region. These include desertification caused by climate change, population growth, and ineffective governance. The region's population has been expanding at a rapid rate, placing additional strain on its scarce resources. The proliferation of arid regions has been exacerbated by climate change, further restricting the accessibility of cultivable land and water resources. Lastly, the disputes have been exacerbated by a lack of defined land possession policies and poor governance, as competing parties vie for the same resources (Muhammed et al., 2024:141). In some instances, persistent conflicts concerning resource control and access that have historically led to violence have escalated into recurring patterns of mass murder and retaliation. Thousands of individuals have perished, and a significant number of individuals have been displaced due to the escalating rural banditry and retaliatory violence between pastoralists and farmers in Nigeria. An assessment conducted by the United Nations in 2018 indicates that the Sudano-Sahel region has experienced a substantial escalation in the frequency of land and water resource-related conflicts over the last ten years (IPCC, 2022:55). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2022:70) report suggests that within the period five years (2016-2020), the number of violent incidents and displacements resulting from these tensions increased.

Figure 1.1: Sudano-Sahel Region



Source: Luizza (2017)

Figure 1.2: Deaths from conflict events in the Sudano-Sahel in which one or more parties are identified as “pastoralists” (2016-2020)



Source: ACLED (2021)

This evidence underscores the increasing recognition and gravity of the matter. Thousands of individuals have perished, and a significant number of individuals have been displaced due to the escalating rural banditry and retaliatory violence between pastoralists and farmers in Nigeria. However, conflicts regarding land and water resources in the Sudano-Sahel region have been a political issue for a long time and were a significant source of disagreement during the colonial and post-independence periods. However, these conflicts have become more prominent in recent years due to the continuous escalation of violence, instability, and displacement in the region. From Mali to South Sudan, governments, regional bodies, peacebuilders, development agencies, environmentalists, economists, and security forces are actively attempting to address the sources of violence and instability that affect both pastoral communities and the rural societies with whom they share resources and landscapes. At the height of these hostilities in central Mali, in March 2019, more than 160 members of the Fulani ethnic group, which has a long history as a pastoralist

¹ This map displays data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), which has been separated into individual occurrences where at least one of the parties engaged is classified as "pastoralist." This research may not have comprehensively captured all conflict events, particularly instances of violence against marginalised communities. Such incidents may be inadequately recorded in news sources and consequently not included in ACLED's statistics.

community, were killed in Ogossagou. Retaliatory attacks followed (Brottem and McDonnel, 2020:25). Furthermore, conflicts involving cattle theft and migration have had a profound and destabilizing effect on internal insurgencies and cross-border violence in Sudan, Central African Republic, and South Sudan. Conflict dynamics involving pastoralism and pastoral communities have evolved into a regional policy objective for these and other factors.

The ongoing escalation of the herders-farmers conflict in several African nations (Chad, Cameroon, Tanzania, Ghana, Sudan, Cameroon, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, and Burkina Faso) has been attributed to factors such as inadequate rainfall, outdated tenure systems, environmental and climate change, and ineffective governing institutions that compel herders to expand their activities beyond their traditional Primary Grazing Areas (PGA) (George, Adelaja, Awokuse, and Vaughn, 2022:281). The pressure on pastoralists and other pull and push factors which encourage herders to graze away from their Primary Grazing Areas. Spontaneous migrations characterized by a lack of regard for land availability may result in competition over resources in the host region (George, Adelaja, Awokuse, and Vaughn, 2022:284).

The inherent characteristics of social living that compel humans to reside in groups also render intergroup conflicts unavoidable (De Dreu, 2014). Intergroup conflicts represent detrimental social dynamics both within and between groups. This is due to the inherent difficulty of achieving seamless and flawless interactions among multiple groups cohabiting or engaging with one another in human society. Human conflict often disrupts intergroup relations, manifesting through competitive, discriminatory, alienating, subjugating, intimidating, exterminatory, and wartime situations within civilizations. This is the situation in Nigeria, a country where herders and farmers have recently been embroiled in frequent violent conflicts in several regions (Sehou, 2022:198).

The diverse composition of Nigeria as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multicultural entity inherently fosters competitive dynamics among various interest groups. Consequently, the nation has experienced a prolonged pattern of intergroup relations characterized by significant conflict since its independence in 1960. The alarming proportions of intergroup conflicts manifesting between and among the various groups constituting the entity known as Nigeria are clearly evident (Babatunde et.al., 2014:1). The foundation of intergroup conflict within the nation is not solely

emphasized through ethnic divisions. The divisions manifest along the lines of religious beliefs, political party affiliations, and regional distinctions, statehood and more (Sehou, 2022:200).

The origins of intergroup conflict in the country can be attributed to the establishment of the Nigerian political entity by the British colonial regime. Before the implementation of the colonial system, the region now known as Nigeria consisted of various autonomous ethno-linguistic communities that organized themselves into either centralized or decentralized political institutions. The interactions among these ethno-linguistic groups were characterized by hostility and antagonism, as evidenced by conflicts such as the Egba-Egbado wars and the Yoruba civil wars. Nevertheless, the merger resulted in the cessation of these altruistic expeditions. The dynamics of inter-group relations in Nigeria can be further elucidated via the lens of the British colonial political strategy of Direct and Indirect Rule (Ofili, 2016). The governmental system of direct control in Southern Nigeria and indirect rule in Northern Nigeria was a strategy designed to divide and exploit the populace, fostering a sense of "us versus them" and thus polarizing the nation. The "we and they" mentality and the polarization of the nation have persisted as a significant source of distrust, tension, animosity, conflict, and enmity among the diverse ethnic groups inside the country. While optimising political and economic benefits for the colonialists, the British colonial political and administrative policies of direct and indirect rule resulted in the polarization of the nation and its populace, exacerbating suspicion, animosity, and, at times, overt hostility.

In Nigeria, transhumant herders and crop cultivators have maintained a symbiotic relationship marked by seasonal migration for a few years. Farmers cultivate their productive lands during the rainy season, whereas migratory herders utilize marginal lands that yield substantial plant phytomass for their livestock. Herders follow established and well-coordinated routes to reach the farmlands for the dry season immediately following the harvest. There, they interchange organic fertilizer for the year-round supply of phytomass. The distance this recurring migration covers varies from a few kilometres to several hundred kilometres (Kitchell, Turner, and McPeak, 2014:14). When precipitation is insufficient, marginal grazing areas might not generate sufficient phytomass to sustain the livestock. As a result, they are required to relocate to rural agricultural farmlands prior to the onset of the arid season. Conflicts may arise when these pests arrive prior

to the farmers' ultimate harvest due to the destruction of crops and competition for resources such as water, grazing routes, and grassland (Brottem, 2016:553).

While disputes between herders and farmers are not unprecedented in the Nigerian context, this level of violence-driven conflict has never been witnessed in the history of intergroup relations between agricultural farmers and herders. Land utilization has become an extremely competitive industry as the global population increases (Jones and Anderson, 2015). Furthermore, detrimental climate and environmental transformations, such as desertification, drought, and weather patterns, have reduced grazable land area for the herders' livestock residing in the primary grazing regions of northern Nigeria. As a result, herdsmen have migrated south into the humid and subhumid regions of southern and central Nigeria, a phenomenon known as "migratory drift." The escalation of farmer-herder disputes in the south and north-central regions of the country was attributed to factors such as migration patterns, alterations in grazing routes, unsupervised livestock grazing by Fulani herders, and agricultural degradation (George et al., 2022:285). This explains the increased coverage of the conflict between pastoralists and cereal producers. The frequent conflicts that have arisen between pastoralists and cultivators throughout the nation have caused Nigeria to suffer immeasurable human and material detriment.

Farmer-pastoralist disputes have claimed the lives of more than 19,000 individuals and displaced over 200,000 since 1999 (International Committee on Nigeria, 2020). Scholars including Abbass (2012:17), Odoh and Chigozie (2012:121), and Okoli et al. (2014:18) have established a correlation between the factors contributing to conflict and the reduction in arable and grazing land caused by desertification, aridity, and global climate change. Additional scholars have examined the causes and catalysts of the conflict between farmers and herdsmen throughout Nigeria (McGregor, 2014:9; Muhammad, Isamila and Bibi, 2015:30; Fasona et al., 2016:7; Chinwokwu, 2017:35; Ducrotoy et al., 2018:11). Certain causes are distant and long-lasting, whereas others are immediate and transient. In this regard, scholarly progress has ascribed violent confrontations between herders and farmers to disputes over land and human and animal populations, the southward migration of herders into tropical zones, the irreconcilable ambitions of the major stakeholders, and the disputants' mutually detrimental behaviours (Tonah, 2006:6; Adebayo & Olaniyi, 2008:73; Abbass, 2009; Olabode & Ajibade, 2010:260 and Nyong, 2010)

In Nigeria, scholars have further observed that violence is exacerbated by factors such as cattle theft, ethnic stereotyping, raping of rural women in host communities, and ineffectiveness of conflict resolution mechanisms (Ofuoku & Isife, 2009:49; Adekunle & Adisa, 2010:15; Bello, 2013:135; McGregor, 2014:10). Additionally, the blocking of waterways by fishers and farmers, the infliction of significant harm on crops by herders' livestock, and retaliatory assaults on herders by farmers during instances of ethnic or religious unrest (Umar, 2002:22; Abbass, 2012:19; Audu, 2014:250). In cases where the government assigns lands for grazing purposes without compensating the rightful landowners, instigating conflict between herders and crop farmers, the potential for widespread lawlessness to be exacerbated exists when indigenous rulers or judges exhibit partiality in resolving disputes (Rasak, 2011:5; Fabusoro & Oyegbami, 2009:17). Other potential causal factors include the gradual erosion of social cohesion, ethnocentrism, religious discrimination among leaders, and cultural conflict (Abbass, 2012; Bello, 2013:133).

Disagreements between pastoralist communities and farmers residing along the Rural Grazing Areas (RUGA), where agricultural communities were relocating for seasonal grazing purposes, are intensifying. Pastoralists are causing damage to crops and farmlands, indiscriminately torching farmlands, contaminating water supplies, and encroaching upon grazing routes and reserves (Muhammed et al., 2024:141). In turn, farmers resort to arbitrary violence, murder, rape, and abduction. Furthermore, because of climate change, population expansion, and underdevelopment, communities that previously cooperated regarding land and natural resources are now realizing that these assets are diminishing, and an increasing number of individuals are striving to exploit the limited resources. An estimated one hundred thousand individuals have perished because of the recurring crises; of these, six thousand have died between 2016 and 2018 alone, and the number of displaced stands at about six hundred thousand (ICIR, 2021; Ilo, Jonathan-Chaver, & Adamolekun, 2019). In addition to the significant mortality rate attributed to the farmer-herder conflict, Nigeria is presently confronted with severe food insecurity.

Although the farmer-herder conflict has expanded beyond Northern Nigeria, confrontations between these two agricultural stakeholders have become widespread throughout the country. The number of fatalities caused by farmer-pastoralist disputes in the North-Central state experienced a decline from 1,205 in 2014 to 314 in 2017. However, the death toll increased once more in 2018 to 1,476 (Harwood, 2019). These incidents have far-reaching consequences for peace, security,

national unity, and development. One example is the recurring violent confrontations between herdsmen and farmers in Benue valley, where farming is the primary source of income for most of the population. On the other hand, the migrated herders of Fulani descent depend on the land for grazing their cattle. The government's implementation of laws and policies that negatively affect intergroup interactions exacerbated the polarisation between herders and farmers. Violence has recently escalated between herders and farmers, particularly since late 2017, when Benue State passed an anti-grazing law that prohibits and criminalizes all activities associated with the open grazing of cattle and cows.

Prior research on the relationship between farmers and herders, such as that of Albert (2004), Agbegbedia (2013), Bukari (2017), Abbass (2012), Odoh & Chigozie (2012), and Okoli, Enyinnia, Elijah & Okoli (2014), primarily focused on conflict dynamics while neglecting to consider other types of power dynamics that are intrinsic to the relationship between the two groups. Assume, for instance, that the relationships between pastoralists and cultivators are productive. Minor misunderstandings should then be borne by the resiliency of existing social ties and network in order to avert perpetual hostilities. To mitigate hostility in the interactions between pastoralist communities and farmers along the Rural Grazing Areas (RUGA), it is imperative that scholarly investigations uncover the role that intergroup dynamics play in the violent conflict among farmers, the majority of whom are indigenous non-indigenous Fulani herdsmen. With any luck, this scientific investigation into the tumultuous relationship between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria will uncover the seemingly endless causes of this conflict and propose solutions that will facilitate a more amicable cohabitation between the two groups.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Though farmers' and herders' conflicts are not new in the Nigerian environment, there has never been a time in the history of intergroup relations among the crop farmers and herders that intolerance has been this violence-driven. With the increasing population, land use has become highly competitive. Moreover, climate change has reduced the availability of feeding land for the herders' flock. As a result, herders' migration increases to the middle-belt area, where conflict with crop farmers occurs. This accounts for the increasing coverage area of crop farmers and herders in Benue state. Most attention on conflict in Nigeria focuses on the North-East, where

Boko Haram has recklessly killed innocent citizens. The recurrent violence between farmers and herders across Benue State has been responsible for most of the incalculable human and material losses in Nigeria. With the high rate of fatality in which farmers-herders conflict is instrumental in the state, Nigeria now faces acute food insecurity.

It is no secret to the government and other stakeholders that there is a lot of conflict between farmers and pastoralists in Benue State, Nigeria, typically due to the herds destroying crops and a lack of resources. This is especially true since most people in the area are farmers and pastoralists. With the environment being degraded, resources becoming scarce, population changing, and politics being unstable, the state could be in a state of chaos, and there are many conflicts. One of the biggest conflicts is between farmers and pastoralists, which has been around for a while due to the fact that it is rooted in the historical, ecological, and political-economic context of the state. Livestock is the primary source of income for more than five million people in Benue State, while over one million people rely on livestock-related businesses. The livestock industry there is mainly controlled by traditional production, processing, and marketing systems. The nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists have most of the cattle, camels, sheep, and goats. They move around between wet and dry areas looking for pasture and water for their herds, which often leads to contact with settled crop farmers and inevitable disputes.

Just as empirical evidence abounds in the literature, print, electronic, and social media are also replete with frightening information about the implications of farmers-herders conflicts for the security of life and property in Benue and Nigeria. For instance, Fulani herders murdered over 300 people in Agatu village in Benue State on February 12, 2016 (Abonu, 2016). From the beginning of the 2015 farming season, more than 70 cases of clashes over farmers' turning of cattle routes to farmland and herders' over-running of farms have been documented (Ezeonwuka & Igwe, 2016:210). There was another case on November 13, 2016, when armed herders attacked residents of the Kuje Area Council in Abuja, killing three people and kidnapping others based on the issue of farmers and herders' crises (Akinrujomi, 2016; cited in Chinwokwu, 2017:40). While Pasquale et al. (2007:222) note that conflict endangers people's livelihoods, especially farmers since their survival depends on natural resources. Moritz (2010:142) holds that herder-farmer conflicts dislocate and threaten Nigeria's agricultural sustainability and pastoral production. As a result of local struggles and the government's incapacity to fully recognize the industry, the Nigerian cattle

market produces merely 6.8 billion USD of a potential 20 billion USD annually (Okello et al., 2014:10). This economic shortage has dire implications for Nigeria's food security and foreign reserves.

Consequently, constructive peacebuilding strategies, including community engagements, dialogue platforms, stakeholder engagements, third-party interventions and other activities that could enhance and develop amiable inter-group relationships between the two groups, have proved abortive as such interventions have been followed with a relapse of the conflict within a short time. As a result of the complementary implications of both occupations for human sustenance, more sophisticated techniques would need to be developed to ensure peaceful coexistence among these productive stakeholders. Hence, this study critically examines inter-group relations and peacebuilding among farmers and herders in rural grazing areas in Benue State.

Prior studies on farmer-herder relations have primarily focused on conflict relations, largely overlooking other forms of inherent power dynamics between the two stakeholders. For example, suppose the understanding and cooperation between the farmers and herders are efficient and sufficient. In that case, the resilience of the existing social ties and networks should bear the strain of minor misunderstandings to prevent incessant conflicts. Therefore, to make interactions between farmer and pastoralist communities along the Rural Grazing Areas (RUGA) in Benue less rancorous, there is a need to conduct an empirical investigation to extend the frontiers of knowledge regarding the underlying social, political, economic, and most importantly, cultural causes of the conflicts.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to interrogate intergroup relations among herders and farmers in the rural grazing area of Benue; however, the specific objectives of the study are to:

1. examine the nature and dynamics of herders and farmers' conflicts in rural grazing communities in Benue State

2. investigate the role of environmental changes, land, and water resources on the dynamics of conflicts and cooperative relations among herders and farmers in rural grazing communities in Benue State.
3. examine the role of cultural, religious, and economic factors in inciting violence and building cooperation between herders and farmers in rural grazing areas and
4. explore the peacebuilding resources for reconciling the warring herders and farmers in Benue State.

1.4 Research Questions

Going by the research problems and study objectives, this study will provide answers to the following consequential questions:

1. What are the nature and dynamics of herders' and farmers' conflicts in rural grazing areas of Benue State?
2. How do environmental changes and land and water resources affect the dynamics of conflicts and cooperative relations among the herders and farmers in rural grazing communities in Benue State?
3. What roles do cultural, religious, and economic factors play in inciting violence and building cooperation between herders and farmers in rural grazing communities in Benue state? and
4. What are the available peacebuilding resources for reconciling the warring herders and farmers in the rural grazing communities in Benue State?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The research is centred around the examination of peacebuilding and intergroup relations between farmers and herders residing in rural pastoral regions of Benue State, Nigeria. The state is located in the north-central part of Nigeria. Makurdi, the administrative centre of this region, obtains its nomenclature from the Benue River. The location of the issue is defined by its geographical coordinates, which fall within the latitudinal range of 60° 30' to 80° 24' North and the longitudinal range of 70° 40' to 100° 00' East. According to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2020),

the region's estimated population for 2022 was 6.1 million. From a geographical standpoint, Benue State is situated near several neighbouring states. Kogi State, Taraba State in its northern hemisphere, Nasarawa State to the south, Cross River and Ebonyi State to the west, and Benue State to the south are all neighbours along its eastern border. The state was formally founded on February 13, 1976, following the partition of territory from the former Benue-Plateau State and a section of Kwara State. Twenty-three (23) local government areas (LGAs) comprise the state's geography: AgatuAdo, Apa, Gboko, Buruku, Guma, Gwer-West, Katsina-Ala, Konshisha, Kwande, Logo, Makurdi, Obi, Ogbadibo, Ohimini, Oju, Otukpo, Okpokwu, Tarka, Ushongo, Ukum and Vandeikya.

The state's geographical area comprises an estimated 31,400 square kilometres. The region's topography consists primarily of low-lying plains with lateritic mesas and inselbergs interspersed sporadically. The topography of the geographical region situated along the Nigeria-Cameroon border is distinguished by the presence of hills. The contested highlands symbolize the Cameroonian mountain ranges' incursion into Nigerian territory. In addition to the Benue River, which serves as the principal waterway in the state, Gwer, Aya, Katsina-Ala, Amile Tamen, Mkomun, Amile Kiriki, Michihe, Loko, Oyongo, Lafa, Okpokwu, Konshisha, and Obi Ochefu also have significant waterways. The River Niger, the Benue Katsina-Ala system, and the Cross River are all fed by numerous streams and rivers. The streams and rivers function as the drainage system of the state (Kwanga and Kerenku, 20 07:2-3).

Like the remainder of Nigeria, Benue State experiences climatic conditions influenced by two discernible air masses, culminating in the development of two unique wind patterns. The air masses being analyzed consist of two components: a tropical maritime mass located in the Atlantic Ocean and a tropical continental air mass situated in the Sahara Desert. The masses mentioned above are accountable for the development of the South West Trade Winds (SW Trades) and North East Trade Winds (N.E. Trades), respectively. The convergence of these winds occurs within the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), which spans the totality of Nigeria and displays a pulsating pattern as it moves north and south of the state per the apparent motion of the sun directly above. Seasons in the state are discernible and are typically denoted as the rainy and arid seasons, respectively. The rainy season is defined as a duration of seven months, which officially begins in April and ends in November (Agbegbedia, 2013:54). The research is concerned with the

fundamental concerns of cooperation, peacebuilding, conflict, intergroup relations, and herding and farming in Benue State.

The study focuses on the Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlements within Benue State, Nigeria. Benue State was selected due to its significant role in Nigeria's agricultural sector and its history of conflicts between farmers and herders. The study will encompass different RUGA settlements across the state, with emphasis on those that have experienced notable inter-group relations dynamics, whether conflictual or cooperative.

The study explore the historical evolution of inter-group relations between farmers and herders in the region, including pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial interactions, an examination of how the economic interests and livelihoods of both farmers and herders contribute to their relations, a critical analysis of the competition over natural resources, such as water and land, which are essential for both farming and herding activities, the role of cultural and social factors in shaping inter-group relations, including ethnic identity, religious affiliations, and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, an investigation of recent conflicts between farmers and herders in RUGA settlements, the efforts made towards peacebuilding, and the effectiveness of these initiatives, an evaluation of the impact of governmental policies, such as the establishment of RUGA settlements, on the relations between farmers and herders, and how governance at both the local and state level influences peacebuilding efforts. The study also explores the role of non-governmental organizations and international bodies in mediating and resolving conflicts, as well as in promoting peacebuilding.

As expected, a study of this nature faces certain limitations; for instance, there is limited availability of reliable historical and current data on inter-group relations and conflicts in the selected RUGA settlements. In the same vein, due to ongoing violence and unrest in the region, there are limitations to the accessibility of certain hinterlands in Benue to collect data. Other limitations are as a result of language differences and barriers. However, the researcher employed local research assistants to translate the data collection instrument as well as assist with question interpretation during data collection exercise.

The study specifically interrogates intergroup dynamics ranging from levels of trust or mistrust between farmers and herders and how these perceptions influence their interactions, factors that trigger conflicts and how they escalate into violence, including the role of external influences and misinformation, Instances and mechanisms of successful collaboration and coexistence between farmers and herders, including shared resource management and intermarriage, the efficacy of communication channels between groups and the role of dialogue in preventing and resolving conflicts, and the influence of community leaders, traditional rulers, and elders in mediating conflicts and fostering peaceful relations.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The outcomes of this study provide substantial theoretical and applied value to an emerging cohort of scholars, stakeholders, and academics, in addition to individuals who actively participated in the peacebuilding endeavour. The methods and intergroup dynamics commonly employed to address disputes between pastoralists and farmers are delineated in the main body of the research for the sole purpose of furnishing references and documentation. To advance economic growth and ensure political stability in the conflict zone, policymakers and researchers will obtain current information. This information is crucial for developing and executing effective programmes that educate stakeholders and actors on conflict prevention among herders and farmers, as well as for mitigating the consequences of actual conflicts.

An ardent examination of the research study yielded impartial viewpoints regarding the environmental and climate change influences that contribute to the genesis and recurrence of conflicts and the contribution of intergroup relations to the peacebuilding process; this study contributes significantly to the resolution of the enduring and chronic farmer-herder conflicts that plague the entire nation of Nigeria, with a particular emphasis on the state of Benue. Furthermore, scholars with an interest in the conceptual development of peacebuilding and intergroup relations frameworks will have the essential data to conduct cross-community and cross-geographic comparisons.

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on conflict transformation and peace studies by providing insights into the dynamics of conflicts between herders and farmers in Benue

State. By conducting a comprehensive analysis of the underlying drivers of the conflicts, the study identifies potential pathways towards reconciliation and peacebuilding.

The study agreed with other past literature that the access to land and the scarcity of land which is the major causes of the conflict between herders and farmers in Benue State; however, the discovery of the interplay of religion and the expansionist tendency of the Fulani oligarchy to expand southward Nigeria and lay claim to part of Benue is novel. This is evident in Ado, Guma, and other communities along the river Benue bank. The new trends of expressions by the farmers that the pastoralists are no longer sedentary but are beginning to settle and also practising farming would contribute more to the understanding of the intergroup relations not just between Fulani herders and indigenous farmers, but also with Fulani farmers and Tiv, Idoma and Jukun farmers in Benue State.

Besides the emphasis on climate change, it also shows that the herder-farmers conflict in Benue is a complex web of socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural variables. These conflicts have been going on for a long time. It is not possible to resolve these problems with straightforward solutions; rather, it also requires complex schemes of strategies. Hence, the resolution of these disputes cannot be achieved through the application of simplistic remedies; rather, it is necessary to take a holistic and comprehensive approach, which includes intergroup. This will include the exchange of information, the mobilisation of resources, and the taking of coordinated action; it is proposed that multi-stakeholder platforms and coordination mechanisms be formed. The formation of partnerships for the provision of services for conflict resolution, programs for the support of livelihoods, and infrastructure development projects that are beneficial to both herders and farmers are included in this approach.

In summary, nonconfrontational and passive conflict management strategies, along with constructive community-based interventions, emerged as the most effective approaches for resolving farmer-herder conflicts. Most participants agreed and highlighted the significance of community-based organisations in managing farmer-herder conflicts, although others indicated that ad hoc local government committees were more effective in conflict resolution in some contexts. The recommendations offered contribute to the development of evidence-based strategies for addressing conflicts in rural grazing communities.

Furthermore, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations involved in peacebuilding efforts among herders and farmers in Nigeria will find this research an invaluable resource. Its objective is to draw attention to the matter of intergroup relations, which these organizations have disregarded.

1.7 Conceptual Clarifications

According to Osaghae (2009:17), every meaningful conceptualization of a concept must begin with a context-based approach since the two cannot be considered independent of one another. As a result, it is imperative to elucidate the subsequent concepts within this dialogue to furnish a comprehensive understanding of the connection that exists among them (Tella and Ogunnubi, 2014:3). An attempt at a conceptual discourse of several concepts that are fundamental to this thesis is provided below. Intergroup relations, pastoralism, RUGA, herdsman, and cultivators are some of these concepts. The preceding is intended to increase the transparency and clarity of the researcher's use of a particular phrase.

1.7.1 Intergroup Relations

Inter-group relations are dynamic in nature, as they are subject to the influence of the ever-changing material and social circumstances that individuals experience. It emerges or is derived from the encounters and exchanges that occur between diverse groups as they compete for survival and well-being, often in relation to finite resources. Intergroup relations are defined by Sherif and Sherif (1969:52) as the circumstances under which members of two or more groups interact in states of amicability or hostility, competition or cooperation, subjugation or dominance, alliance or animosity, peace or conflict. Intergroup connections, as stated by Afigbo (1987:74), are a dynamic and intricate concept. A significant aspect of society pertains to the political domain, which may materialize in amicable or antagonistic ways. Furthermore, economic and technological factors exert considerable influence in conjunction with the cultural sphere, which comprises a multitude of manifestations including but not limited to fashion, dance, music, matrimonial ceremonies, and artistic expressions. Further facets include the interaction among philosophical and legal systems, cosmological concepts, traditional narratives and linguistic patterns, religious

convictions, and traditional narratives. In the same vein, Okpeh (2007:132) also noted that interactions between social groupings have become more intricate and interdependent to facilitate collaboration and compromise. Due to the nature and character of the relationship, a congenial and encouraging demeanour is essential. Although this claim possesses a certain amount of truth, it also poses difficulties when examined from an alternative standpoint. This is precisely the case in Nigeria, where antagonistic and venomous relations exist between certain communities. The Ife-Modakeke confrontations have been marked by animosity, devastation, and substantial property and human casualties. Similarly, the interethnic disputes that transpired in Share-Tsaragi encompassed the Kwara State communities of Yoruba and Nupe.

1.7.2 Farmers

Agriculture and the rearing of living organisms for the purpose of providing sustenance or basic materials constitute the definition of a farmer, who is also known as an agriculturalist. This is a globally applicable generalized expression that is commonly applied to individuals who are involved in the management of various types of agricultural enterprises, including field crops, vineyards, poultry, and livestock. A farmer may either be the owner of the land they cultivate or perform labour on land that is not theirs.

Hussein (1998:410) defines a “farmer” as an individual engaged in agriculture who maintains permanent settlements and achieves near-self-sufficiency through crop production; they may also generate supplementary income by rearing domestic animals and participating in crop cultivation. The alternative term for sedentary farmers is “cottage farmers.” A component of lowland dry farming systems, crop-livestock agriculture is found in 10% of the world’s arid regions and provides sustenance for a population ten times greater than that of pastoral production systems (Agbegbedia, 2013). Within this specific context, the prevalence of erratic precipitation frequently results in a substantial scarcity of accessible food sources, potentially carrying catastrophic consequences. Overgrazing may manifest in the absence of restrictions on animal population size and inadequate management of their interaction with crop production (UNRISD, 1997). Already occurring environmental degradation would be exacerbated by this action. It is critical to acknowledge that individuals involved in sedentary agriculture are also engaged in husbandry and stock reproduction.

Similarly, a considerable number of individuals engaged in livestock or herding activities also perform some form of land labour. An alternative way to conceptualize the relationship between farming and herding is as a link between the two, along which a continuum is evident. Furthermore, although it may seem paradoxical at first glance, the expansion of pastoralism as an independent economic endeavour was, in fact, aided by the advancement of agriculture (Galaty and Johnson, 1990:119). Abba and Usman (2008:18) support this notion and assert that the agricultural sector facilitated the development of a regionalized structure for mutual trade between farmers and pastoralists. The two groups were capable of exchanging products and services due to this framework.

1.7.3 Pastoralism

As illustrated by Azarya (1996:76), “pastoralism” refers to an economic strategy that revolves around the husbandry of livestock, a pursuit by individuals who are either stationary or mobile. On the other hand, nomadism refers to the degree to which the communities being studied are involved in constant movement across their diverse environments. Consequently, the scholarly literature is largely in agreement that pastoral output and the degree of residential mobility are conceptually distinct. Further scrutiny of this line of reasoning reveals that additional scholars, Salzman (1980:29), have presented substantiating evidence that supports the viability of multi-resource nomadism. This suggests that mobile societies with the capacity to combine foraging and agricultural practices would be necessary to elude detection by governing bodies (Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson, 1980:18). Recognizing the intrinsic value of nomadism in relation to the social, political, and environmental dimensions of pastoralism is of the utmost importance. Serving as an example among numerous movements, it embodies the technological and methodological facets of pastoralism. The principal aim of this entity is to elude a wide range of dangers that are inherent in both the material and social environment of pastoralism. Individuals involved in agriculture frequently find the described option unattainable on account of their profound attachments to their agricultural lands and the stored agricultural commodities they hold. Pastoralists, as stated by Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson (1980:17–18), undertake the endeavour of travelling in the company of their livestock for a multitude of rationales. One such rationale is to alleviate rivalry with other collectives. Furthermore, pastoralists might opt to migrate

as a strategic manoeuvre to evade potential authorities and reduce their vulnerability to pests and diseases.

1.7.4 Rural Grazing Areas (RUGA) Settlement

RUGA is an indigenous Hausa word that traditionally meant “Cow Settlement.” Additionally, it serves as an acronym for the English term “Rural Grazing Area” (RUGA). The rural grazing area (RUGA) settlement model entails the establishment of sedentary farmers and nomadic herdsman in specific areas to mediate the protracted conflict between these two groups. The purpose of RUGA settlements is to mitigate the problem through the establishment of enduring human communities in these regions. This approach involves allowing herders to establish permanent residence in designated regions to resolve the dispute. It is imperative to emphasize that the concept of RUGA settlement is not novel in Nigeria; on the contrary, it is an established phenomenon that has assumed a contemporary manifestation (Sayedi& Abdullahi, 2019:279).

A variety of unique attributes distinguishes RUGA localities. The concept of RUGA settlement can be historically linked to the first republic of Nigeria and Sir Ahmadu Bello, the former premier of the Northern region, in particular. During his tenure, Sir Ahmadu Bello was more commonly referred to as the Sardauna of Sokoto (Waheed, Abiola, Nzor, &Nda-Isaiah, 2019). The initial execution of this initiative occurred after Nigeria’s attainment of independence in 1960. Due to a lack of funding, the RUGA strategy, which is presently stalled, aimed to establish designated communities where pastoralists could reside, care for their animals, produce milk, and engage in other activities customarily associated with cattle husbandry. The objective of this initiative is to decrease the duration that herdsman must allocate to traversing in pursuit of fresh grazing areas for their livestock. The notion of RUGA settlements has garnered renewed attention in the Fourth Republic of Nigeria due to the escalating frequency of violent occurrences involving pastoralists and farmers. Waheed et al. (2019) report that approximately N10 billion was allocated by former President Goodluck Jonathan for this endeavour; nevertheless, the necessary funds were not accessible to execute it. In contemporary times, it has become evident that herdsman frequent roadside locations, educational institutions, and stadiums when they engage in open grazing. Recently, this phenomenon has become more widespread. The proliferation of agricultural activities has contributed to the encroachment of farmers along traditional livestock routes, a

circumstance that has given rise to this circumstance (Sayedi& Abdullahi, 2019). Furthermore, this phenomenon could potentially be ascribed to the growing interest among individuals in agricultural endeavours.

The reintroduction of RUGA settlements was authorized by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), led by President Muhammadu Buhari and responsible for the six geopolitical zones of the country, on January 17, 2019 (Shehu, 2019). With the intention of mitigating the issue of unrestricted cattle movement and controlling open grazing, this action was taken. Cattle ranches in RUGA settlements are owned and administered collectively. The system's implementation will occur in seven pilot states within the nation that are particularly susceptible to conflicts arising between herdsman and farmers. These nations are mentioned in the preceding clause. As stated by Shehu (2019), the territories in concern are Adamawa, Benue, Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, Taraba, and Zamfara. The Federal Government of Nigeria's (FGN) decision to reintroduce the National Livestock Transformation Plan (2018–2027) was prompted by the presentation delivered by the National Economic Council (NEC) as an integral part of the plan. Ideas from the NEC were incorporated into the presentation. As stated by Shehu (2019), the primary objective of this endeavour is to efficiently address the protracted disputes that have plagued the relationship between herdsman and farmers while also significantly advancing the expansion and progress of the livestock industry. Former Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Chief Audu Ogbeh informed the Nigerian people on May 12, 2019, of the President's sanction of the RUGA settlement execution in response to current concerns (Uche, 2019).

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into the following nine chapters:

Chapter 1 is an introduction chapter. It includes an overview of the study's context, a clear description of the research issue, specific research goals, well-defined research questions, an explanation of the study's importance, the scope of the research, and precise definitions of keywords. Chapter 2 focuses on ethnicity, agriculture and land use in Nigeria, nomadic pastoralism, pastoralism and herding in Nigeria, the emergence of the Fulani herders in Benue, the evolution of the herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria, nature forms and dynamism of the herders-

farmers' conflict and informal institution, conflict management and peacebuilding among herders and farmers in Nigeria, as well as the empirical review of Literature on herders-farmers' conflict. Chapter 3 examines the themes of the dissertation through the principal theories of the Eco-Violence theory, the Social Identity theory, realistic Group Conflict theory and the Rational Choice theory. Chapter 4 explains the methodology and design adopted for this study. The study site, study population and sample size, and data collection and analysis are described in this chapter. Chapters 5 to 8 present and analyze the data in response to the study's research objectives. Chapter 5 discusses the findings on the nature and dynamics of herder and farmer conflicts in rural grazing communities in Benue State. Chapter 6 analyzes and discusses the findings on the role of environmental changes, land, and water resources on the dynamics of conflicts and cooperative relations among herders and farmers in rural grazing communities in Benue State. Chapter 7 analyzes and discusses the data gathered on the cultural, religious, and economic factors in building cooperation in the conflicts between herders and farmers in rural grazing areas. Chapter 8 analyzes and discusses the data gathered on peacebuilding resources for reconciling the warring herders and farmers in Nigeria. The study concludes with Chapter 9, presenting the summary of significant findings, conclusions, and recommendations in relation to the research objectives and questions.

1.9 Chapter Conclusion

The chapter provides an overview and contextual details of intergroup relations and peacebuilding between herders and farmers in Benue State. The presentation includes the establishment of the issue of statement, research goals and questions, as well as the scope and importance of this study. This chapter also presents a foundational comprehension of fundamental concepts such as intergroup connections, farmers, pastoralism, and RUGA. The subsequent chapter focuses on the examination of pertinent literature in relation to the subject.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a concise overview of the main themes that have previously been discussed and highlight the current deficiencies that this study seeks to address. The literature review encompasses the scholarly publications pertaining to the following areas of concern: ethnicity and ethnic groups in Nigeria, the history of Fulani expansion in Nigeria, agriculture and land use in Nigeria and Benue, pastoralism and herding in Nigeria, the emergence of the Fulani Herders in Benue, evolution of the farmers-Herders Conflict in Nigeria, Nature, forms, dynamism of the herder-farmer conflict in Benue, and the Informal Institutions and peacebuilding among Herders and farmers in Benue. Accessing empirical data on the relationships between herders and farmers in Nigeria is challenging due to the heavy reliance on secondary research in most prior studies. As a result, there has been a notable decrease in both qualitative and quantitative research, including on-site data collection. Nevertheless, the chapter provides a detailed description of empirical investigations conducted on the topic.

2.2 Farming in Nigeria

According to Willis (2001:59), farming is the centre of any agricultural process. This is because more input is required in the form of humans or animals during this process. Agricultural activity in Nigeria deals with the extraction of crops and animal products. Nigeria has a long historical background of farming or tillage. The farming system was developed by the Nigerians even before the coming of the colonial masters. Farming has been the occupation and way of life of several ethnic groups in the country, and this is because it provides the people with a means of survival, a closer realization of adequate food, clothing, and shelter, and an improvement in the welfare and quality of life.

Fukuoka (1985:17) argued that farming has also been a part of the rich cultural heritage and civilization of the people of Nigeria. This is reflected in their arts, ceremonies, religion, and other aspects of their culture. The farming method has also contributed to a portion of Nigeria's

traditional medicine system. The traditional herbs or medicines are the products of the forest that have been conserved by the villagers as their source of alternative livelihood. These clear facts show that farming is an important activity in the daily life of the people of Nigeria. In the light of modern agriculture, Nigerian farming has undergone a great change from the qualitatively better traditional mode of subsistence farming to the prevailing inefficient capital-intensive mode.

Assessing the historical overview of farming, Giller et al. (2021:1083) posit that another evidence of farming activities and their importance is the usage of cave and rock shelters in Jos Plateau to be used as a residence for the early agriculturists who tended their cattle and cultivated crops such as millet and sorghum. According to them, this is shown by the polishing millstones that these early agriculturists used to grind the crops and tubers. These activities were further solidified when the Nok people developed a higher level of agricultural skill and productiveness in Southern Kaduna, where the Nok Culture was discovered. The Nok people cultivated pearl millet. Two of the most important crops grown were sorghum and millet, which are still major staples throughout Nigeria today. The high level of skill and tradition involved in Nok agriculture is shown through the terracotta and copper alloy sculptures produced by the Nok people. One of these sculptures, a figure of a man carrying a flute in one hand and a gourd on his lap, portrays a musician taking a break from his farm work. This shows that the Nok people had produced a surplus in food supply, which secured their livelihood and allowed them to pursue other activities.

In the ancient significant history of Nigeria, farming played a major role, which was evident with the farming activities and technologies used by the people of Nigeria during those periods. Though more evidence in the form of historical texts and materials are needed to learn much about Nigeria's farming activities due to inadequate research, there has been concrete evidence from the period of Iron smelting in Taruga. It has been discovered that the people of Nigeria during those periods cultivated various types of crops, and the smelting of iron ore and casting to produce tools and other objects for their use was carried out simultaneously with farming. Iron smelting sites would usually be located near sources of water and fuel, that is, arable land, and this was to facilitate and ensure a continuous supply of iron ore and charcoal to the smelting furnaces (Green et al., 2005).

2.2.1 Farming and the Nigerian Economy

According to Ikechukwu (2011), there is increased access to ECOWAS and other international markets with agricultural products, but quality control needs to be determined for the global market. Today, Nigerian agriculture is on the threshold of a new dawn as there are so many new incentives that agriculture will once again be the leading sector in the economy, and it is believed that the present regime is creating a new political determination to transform agriculture and promote economic diversification. Today, agriculture is actively raising income levels in the rural areas, which are home to most people experiencing poverty in Nigeria. Small-scale farmers account for about 85% of the total farm holdings, and agriculture is the major source of livelihood for most of the rural households in Nigeria (Mgbenka, Mbah and Ezeano, 2016:52). This trend is evident from the fact that since 1980, the national food supply level has kept pace with the population growth compared to the food imports before (Omorogiuwa, 2011:12). The poverty level, which is a serious social problem, can be reduced with the cash income from agricultural produce, and the food supply situation can be improved. All these development activities will stimulate demand for foodstuffs, thus increasing the rate of return to farmers in both the food and cash crops. Today, infrastructure development such as the rural feeder roads, storage facilities, and irrigation projects have made farmer access easier (Aiyedogbon et al., 2022: 33).

According to Bello (2020:120), the importance of farming in the economy can be understood from the contribution of agriculture to the National Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the employment generation, and the development of the market. The growth of the Nigerian economy can be largely explained by the upsurge in agricultural production in the first and second tenures of Olusegun Obasanjo in 1979-1983 and 2003-2007 and the regime of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. In 1960, when Nigeria got its independence, the total export value was led by agricultural products, contributing about 70-57% of the revenue. Then, after the discovery of oil, there was a decline in the agricultural sector. Today, agriculture has suffered several years of neglect as the oil boom led to the development of the country's infrastructure with little investment in agricultural productivity (Aiyedogbon et al. 2022:30). But after the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986, which was aimed at diversifying the economy from oil to the non-oil sectors, there was a shift in the awareness that agriculture is to be treated as big business. The non-oil exports, on average, exceed the value of all agricultural exports before 1970 in terms of Naira.

The agricultural share of non-oil exports was well above 80% in the 1980s and averaged 70% in the 1990s. The non-oil exports for the year 2003 were agriculture-based, about 95.3% (Ademola, 2019:11).

2.2.2 Major Crops and Livestock

In Nigeria, the annual precipitation is less than 1000 mm, and the growing season is 180 days or fewer. Consequently, a significant portion of the area endures a prolonged (7-9 months) severe dry period. The duration of growth decreases along a south-north gradient. The sandy soil in this region is typically characterized by low levels of organic carbon and cation exchange capacity and nutritional deficiencies, particularly in nitrogen and phosphorus. The predominant crops in the region are maize, sorghum, and millet, with maize and sorghum becoming less prominent as you move towards the north. The practice of intercropping cereals with grain legumes is prevalent in more than 90% of fields, with cowpea and groundnut being the predominant legume components. Both grain and leftovers from cropping, as well as ruminant livestock, are integral parts of the farming system. To a lesser extent, cattle, sheep, goats, and camels offer various resources such as milk, meat, labour, manure, and monetary value (Bagayoko et al., 2000).

Most Nigerian farmers grow crops that are sold in the Nigerian market to earn a living, while a smaller number grow crops for export. Some of the major non-oil export crops are cocoa, groundnuts, rubber, and timber. In the Northern region, the most common crops include millet, maize, sorghum, cowpea, groundnut, and rice. In the Middle Belt, yams, cassava, and rice are the predominant crops, while in the Southern region, the most important are yams, cassava, and plantains. The South also grows oil palms and cacao and is the region where most cash crops are grown (Ezeaku, 2015:4270). Another key feature of farming activities in Nigeria is the use of a traditional farming system, which yields only a small output per capita.

On the other hand, there are a few examples of modern plantations that grow high-yielding crops. An example is the Nigerian Stored Products Research Institute, which has a maize plantation in the Northern region of Nigeria (Sanusi, 2010). The institute was established to conduct research on reducing post-harvest losses and improving the quality of food crops. It is a Federal Government institute, and there are other similar institutes and private plantations in Nigeria. Although these modern plantations are an effective way to improve the quality and yield of crops and to reduce

post-harvest losses, many Nigerians do not have the knowledge or means to change their farming methods.

2.2.3 Farming Activities

Odoh et al. (2019:117) believe that the different types of farming mentioned have traditional and modern elements in them. Shifting cultivation, a type of farming that involves clearing land for cultivation through burning (slash and burn) and then cultivating the land until its fertility is lost, is a traditional method of farming. This method of farming has existed for centuries and is still used in many parts of the world. It is known by different names in different regions of the world, but the practice is the same. In Nigeria, it is known as “taungya”, and it is a supplementary method of cultivation rather than a complete system.

The second type of cultivation is the opposite of shifting cultivation in terms of intensity. The intensive system involves the investment of labour and capital into a small piece of land. The aim is to bring about a surplus, and it involves the use of organic and inorganic fertilizers to improve soil fertility and increase the use of labour to combat labour shortages (Aduradola, 2004: 134). This type of cultivation is aimed at taking advantage of a favourable price to productivity ratio and is often known as the dual system because it is carried out by farmers who have a second job to supplement farming income. Both these traditional systems of farming can be compared to subsistence and market gardening but with substantial differences in techniques and level of technology.

2.2.3.1 Traditional Farming Techniques

Traditional farming techniques are still cherished by the older generation of farmers, who see this as part of their heritage and a way of distinguishing themselves from large-scale mechanized farming. The tools that most farmers have access to are not very different from those that their ancestors would have used. Cutlasses (large knives) are used to clear large areas of land of bush and trees and are also used to cut the grass and vegetation in the farms to act as feed for the livestock. Hoes are used primarily for land preparation where the ground is too hard to use a plough and for mixing the soil after fertilizer has been spread on it (Adeyemo, 2013:7). The most common farming tool is the plough which used to be a small handheld wooden plough with an iron blade

that was used in conjunction with oxen. However, bullocks are much too expensive for the average farmer, so the plough has been developed to be used with a single ox or even a water buffalo. This is still the most popular way of land preparation by small-scale farmers, and it is said that the Jukun tribe in the Gongola State have 80% of their farmers using the traditional plough even though modern machinery is available to them. Another method of land preparation used by some tribes is to clear a section of forest and burn the trees and vegetation. The ashes act as a natural fertilizer, and the land is said to be very fertile for a few years, but after this time, it will be infertile, and the farmers will move on to clear more forests. This method has been a major cause of deforestation and soil degradation in Nigeria, and it is said that shifting cultivators have been a major contributor to environmental degradation (Aduradola, 2004).

2.2.3.2 Modern Farming Practices

Although a significant number of farmers still practice subsistence-level farming using traditional methods, according to Alli (2016), many more Nigerians are using modern farming methods. There are several farming programs and technical aids provided by non-government organizations and the public sector to assist modern-day farmers. Techniques that are commonly used are no-tillage, multi-cropping, inter-cropping, and incorporation of crop residue. A larger number of farmers are using chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides.

However, the government has urged that all chemical usage should be done cautiously. This is due to the large numbers of farmers who have little or no education on how to use the chemicals, which may lead to the destruction of the environment and serious health problems. The government has been implementing techniques in an attempt to modernize the more traditional farmers. These include raising awareness about using higher-quality seeds and saplings. To increase economic viability, the government has helped introduce the concept of Farmers' Field Schools (FFS) (Adebuyi, 2016:17). These schools are used to teach the benefits of integrated crop management in an attempt to attain higher production at lower cost and utilise methods that do not harm the environment. They do this by hands-on experience, often with crop-growing trials. If farmers can see the benefits in their own eyes, they will be more reluctant to use the methods. With direct insight from a study organized by the FFS, farmers can compare different methods of farming and see which is most economically viable for them. The FFS offers several other advantages in an

attempt to modernize the traditional farmer. The CCC (Corps Credit Corporation), in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture, have provided loans for the construction of farm buildings and to purchase farm vehicles. The repayment of the loan is taken out of the farmers' harvest (Adeoye, 2010:11). This is a good incentive as it forces the farmer to work efficiently, knowing that he can receive further loans with sufficient progress. If the loan is not repaid, the government will help by subsidizing the remaining payment.

2.3 Farming and the Nigerian History

Very few research articles focus specifically on farming and Nigerian history. This, although is agriculture, is regarded as a major economic, subsistence and cultural significance to most of Nigeria's population and has been so for the entirety of the nation's past. Welsh (1986) provides details about the history of the colonial and post-colonial economic development of the Nigerian state, which provides a relevant backdrop for the nation's farming past and present. There is no specific focus on farming; however, the level of detail about the wider political economy makes it a useful resource for those working specifically on Nigerian farming. Ikejiani's article examines the pre-colonial Nigerian setting with specific reference to the Igbo. The article describes the agricultural life of the Igbo in detail, providing some insightful generalizations that can be related to the wider Nigerian experience and some very useful specific historical points about the impact of pre-colonial state structures and the colonial intrusion on Igbo agriculture. The article claims to have sourced its material from various historical documents.

However, it is not specific about what they are, and its own references are quite limited. It is, however, the most detailed piece of work on farming in Nigeria, past or present, that the author (or indeed likely any other) has found, and it is somewhat of a hidden gem. A Brazilian article by Silva and Oliveira (2012) seeks to compare the traditional farming knowledge and practices of peasant communities in Nigeria and Brazil. While the focus of the article is comparing Brazilian agricultural extension policies with the experience of an NGO in Nigeria, it does contain a fair amount of good information about traditional farming systems in Nigeria that is drawn from various historical references. Overall, there is much to be gained from reading research articles on farming and Nigeria from outside of the English-speaking world. Nevertheless, the relative lack of specifically focused work on the topic is apparent.

The concern with African economic history as a separate entity rather than just a precursor to colonial history came about in the 1970s and 80s. At the same time, there was a shift from the previous purely political-historical narrative towards an approach that examined other dimensions of African societies. This new approach to historical research was paralleled in Nigeria-based academic studies, with more research work by Nigerian and non-Nigerian scholars. In 1967, the Historical Society of Nigeria was founded, and in G.N Uzoigwe's words, "this society marks the beginning of modern historical research in Nigeria". An often-emphasised factor in academic research on Nigerian history is the movement away from purely oral sources to increased utilisation of written sources, a development which has increased the reliability of historical research in the country.

The academic interest in the relationship between farming and Nigerian history is rooted in the 1940s when Western scholarship began taking an interest in African history. However, this early work neglected the question of economic history and economic development. The assumption was that Africa had no history worth talking about until the European powers colonised the continent. Nigeria and other West African countries have always been seen as having histories over which there is an imposition of European colonial history. It was not until the 1970s that historians began to question the Eurocentric assumptions inherent in the study of African history and sought to establish a separate and indigenous African line of historical enquiry, and a significant body of historical work on Nigeria was produced.

In general, the second part of the book is helpful in understanding the history of Nigeria between the 16th and 19th centuries. It is worth noting that neither of the authors of my book was aware of the conference or this book. However, it has still provided valuable secondary data. Cohen's (1997:45) paper also takes a comparative approach, examining labor systems and social change in Nigeria. This paper is useful as it challenges generalizations about African history and highlights the diversity of Nigeria, comparing it to changes in other parts of the world.

MPerham's (1990) study titled "Three Local Studies: An Inquiry into the Archives" focuses on the general happenings of various communities in Nigeria. It explores how changes in global market prices of cash crops affected different areas and the decision-making processes of native peoples in Nigeria. The book's second part focuses on the peasantry in Nigeria and includes papers from

well-known historians such as Martin Lynn, Margery Perham, and Robin Cohen. The most useful paper in this part is Martin Lynn's "The Development of a Cocoa Farming Community in the Ondo Province of Western Nigeria." Lynn provides detailed information about the changes in the farming system in Ondo and compares it to the Northern Region. Lynn has also gathered statistics on land use, which we have also attempted to do. His paper is particularly valuable for comparing environmental changes and their effects in Ondo with those of the Northern Region.

Rereading *Nigerian History* is a collection of papers brought about by a conference in 1978. The book is divided into two parts. The first part mainly discusses the colonial economy in Nigeria. However, this part is less useful for my research as A.G. Hopkins has already covered the effects of World War II on the colonial economy in a detailed monograph.

The Nigerian Ministry of Agriculture has publicized reports yearly or bi-annual on-farm activities and crop production throughout the country. These reports have detailed studies declaring which regions of Nigeria had surpluses or deficits of specific crops. They provided insight into the authentic activities in farming and specific crops. Activity studies often show the beginning of partial mechanization or the introduction of peasant cash crops into complex farming activities and the consequent increase in specialization. Studies on food crops have often shown that a considerable portion is allocated to cash crop development. The reports have changed in focus and distribution over time but are highly consistent in quality and usefulness. These are the types of reports that are the raw data of history. They can be used to understand the present situation as they are made and can be compared with other studies to make judgments of change over time in each area or subject. Although being both primary material and about relatively recent occurrences, most of these reports are currently inaccessible, even to researchers in Nigeria. This is a great pity for Nigerian historiography, which too often neglects social and economic history for political history and those concerned with Nigeria's recent past. One project of the International African Institute's forthcoming 'Nigeria' volume is compiling a select and annotated bibliography of these reports and other official publications relevant to Nigerian history.

2.4 Pre-Colonial Intergroup Relations

There is much evidence to support that pre-colonial Nigeria was a host to significant ethnic diversity. Estimates from Emeka Nwosu suggest that the major contemporary ethnic groups had largely crystallized by the mid-2nd millennium CE. In total, these groups numbered around 250, though some were clearly related, and many collapsed into one another over time (Ekeh, 1997: 4). The time depth of these ethnic groups has been a topic of much interest to historians. It has been suggested that Igbo origins can be traced back to around the 9th century BC (Afigbo, 1972:93), while the more historically attested Yoruba kingdoms can be dated to the 11th-12th centuries CE.

The Hausa states had a radically different history, with the founding Sakwaya state of the 10th century eventually giving way to a series of Hausa city-states under the Sokoto caliphate. The early histories of these states are somewhat of an enigma, but it has been suggested that each group was a distinct political entity and that interactions between groups were low-scale and largely peaceful. Northcote Thomas, who travelled in Nigeria between 1909 and 1913, provides evidence that the Igbo had a series of decentralized governments and assented to no central authority.

The same can be said of the Yoruba and the Hausa, who had a system of governance largely based on the balancing of power between the king and city-state council. Conflict can be dated to between the 14th and 18th centuries when a series of Jihad wars led primarily by the Fulani peoples brought Islam to various regions of Nigeria and initiated vast social change. In the north, the Hausa states came under the influence of the Sokoto Caliphate, while the Yoruba were unable to mount a unified resistance to the Ilorin jihad, and the Igbo largely resisted change and warred with the Fulani. Unfortunately, inter-group conflict was exacerbated by the actions of the British in their attempts to unify Nigeria under colonial rule.

2.4.1 Colonial Influence on Intergroup Relations

The establishment of British colonial rule in Nigeria was engineered on the practice of 'divide and rule', with the belief that it is easier to rule a Nigeria divided against itself than a Nigeria united. With over 250 ethnic groups, a cultural and religious divide and a 50/50 split between Muslim and Christian populations- Nigeria provided the perfect setting to put this strategy into practice. The British policy has been described as 'indirect rule' and involved the use of the already existent

hierarchical structures within many Nigerian societies, using traditional chiefs as 'puppets' to enforce the colonial message (Bobowik, 2018). This fractured the balance of power and legitimacy in many chiefdoms and often led to autocratic rule in place of democratic decision-making. This disempowerment of the people at the grassroots level, to an extent, is still seen today as many Nigerians feel a sense of disconnection from the political process and lack the enthusiasm for involvement in politics due to a history of having a decision-making process 'forced' upon them.

The use of 'Indirect rule' also caused much inter-ethnic tension, as the British were inclined to use certain ethnic groups in administrations and the army, arguing that they were more 'sophisticated' than others, which complements their belief that some people should be more educated and enlightened than others. An example of this is in the North, where the British favored the Muslim House of Fulani and granted them a virtual oligopoly on power in the region (Okpeh, 2007:130). This caused Hausa-Fulani dominance to the detriment of other groups in the region, which saw little representation in political decision-making. This early manipulation of power in colonial times caused a precedent for many power struggles between groups in later years.

2.4.2 Post-Independence Challenges

Problems of intergroup in Nigeria began to attract both academic interest and international attention in the first half of the 1960s when it became apparent that the first independent African federation was threatened by these very problems. The recent literature on the subject coincides largely with efforts to learn from what has gone wrong in Nigeria, thereby contributing to its survival as a nation-state. The popular "ethno theory of secession" was originally developed as an explanatory device following the first coup and counter-coup of 1966 and popular dissatisfaction with the first republic (Molokwu, 2023:2012). The general idea was that things were going so badly wrong that most educated Nigerians were looking for a way out, and during much of 1966, the main political parties were forming subregional alliances which were widely believed to be coalitions for secession. During the Nigeria-Biafra war, however, the theory was reformulated as a hypothesis and has been so reformulated several times since then. There is an extensive literature, both academic and popular, by Nigerians as well as foreigners, on the causes of the first coup and the counter that followed it, and much has been written on the consequences in terms of changes of attitude between the different ethnic nationalities.

2.5 Intergroup Conflict

Realistic conflict theory hypothesizes a direct relationship between conflict and competition over resources. It is suggested that when groups compete, the result is an increase in negative stereotypes of the outgroup with a corresponding increase in hostility between the two groups. If the competition intensifies and the groups perceive the resources in question to be of a zero-sum nature (i.e., they can only be won if the outgroup loses them), then the result is widespread violence. The superordinate goals model, which involves two conflicting groups coming together in a cooperative effort to achieve a goal that is important to both and which neither can achieve alone, has been suggested as a method of reducing conflict between two groups in this situation.

However, Sherif and Sherif's (1964:92) classic Robber's Cave experiment demonstrated how difficult it can be to implement this strategy. Hewstone and Brown (1986:56) and Brown (1986:32) have categorized the causes of intergroup conflict into three main groups: realistic conflict theory, social categorization, and social identity theory. These theories complement each other and together cover a great deal of information.

2.5.1 Causes of Intergroup Conflict

According to Ofili, (2016:172), economic deprivation is the most common reason for intergroup violence. This theory is widely accepted among social scientists. Relative deprivation is a discrepancy between what people think they deserve and what they think they can get. It is not the objective but the subjective condition which breeds hostility and activates a social movement to change the existing system. On the part of the deprived, the difference between the two may lead to feelings of anger, aggression, and subsequently violent action. The magnitude of the disparity is directly proportionate to the magnitude of the violent action. This was seen in the Biafran war, where eastern Nigeria felt that it deserved more of the cut of the oil revenue, and in refusing to accept the statutory number of 60%, on the 2nd of August 1967, Colonel Ojukwu declared the Eastern Region to be a separate, independent state called the Republic of Biafra. This action eventually led to a war which claimed between 1 and 3 million lives (Osadola, 2019:112). Another explanation of the causes of intergroup conflict is the scapegoat theory. This theory argues that frustration is often difficult to bear because it may be directed against a force that individuals

cannot physically confront (Blainey, 1971:83). Frustration produces a hostile readiness to act, which leads to the search for a responsible target. Suppose the party of the first part cannot confront the source of his frustration; in that case, he can frequently turn his hostility against a party of the second part in anticipation of hostile acts that will bring legitimate counter hostilities. This was true in the Hausa-Fulani and Berom conflict, where perceived Hausa hostility led to Berom attacks and the killing of many Hausa, due to the belief that the Hausa politicians in power were sending them there to take over their land (Petronko, 1971).

2.5.2 Intergroup Conflict in Nigeria

The central thrust of the section on examples of intergroup conflict in Nigeria is that, dating at least back to the colonial period, successive governments have attempted to manipulate the state's federal system to their advantage, typically in pursuit of monopolizing political power. The Igbo believe that the federal character principle was disproportionately applied to them, effectively isolating them from the levers of power (Obi, 2001:17). The northern-dominated military regimes variously sought to combat political regionalism, express northern grievances over post-civil war reconstruction, and perpetuate the political dominance of the north. A succession of military decrees aimed at restructuring the federation undermined its federal character and shifted power to the center, arousing intense regional opposition to what was perceived as northern or military hegemony. This directly or indirectly triggered violent conflict in several states and thereby constituted interstate (that is, intergroup) conflict. Regional political leaders and their movements were often the instigators of intergroup violence. In the Western region, for example, the Action Group and the Maba speech of 1966 represented a rare instance in Nigeria of an elite blatantly inciting intergroup violence. In the quest for political ascendancy in the northern region throughout the 1980s, the Arewa People's Congress sponsored intergroup militias with the tacit approval of the state government. Such violent activism by northern factions frequently targeted not only southerners, but rival northern factions, and was a common factor in the proliferation of communal violence in the Middle Belt (Olaniyan, 2009:524). One of the most disastrous instances of elite manipulation of ethnic cleavages was the military regime's encouragement of the importation of ethnic militias to the Niger Delta region to suppress a popular movement protesting environmental destruction and abuses by the oil industry.

2.5.3 Intergroup Cooperation

Intergroup cooperation involves different social groups of persons interacting with interdependent goals. It is widely believed that cooperation between groups is a positive value. It is held that if working in conjunction with the two groups, then having a common superordinate goal will reduce the tension between them, reduce negative attitude formation and discrimination of the out-group, and ultimately lead to improved relations between the groups. This has been supported by many theorists and researchers. A common goal that all groups want to achieve. This goal needs to be superordinate, which means that it is common to both groups, and neither can achieve it without the help of the other. Sherif et al. (1961:91) argued that, this could mean a reduction of water resources, or it can also mean a sporting event. In both cases, the groups will need to interact to achieve the goal, possibly leading to improved relations. Johnson and Johnson (1989:45) agree with Sherif; they believe that cooperative efforts can promote more positive attitudes and behaviour, conflict resolution, and an increase in social integration between groups. Their view arose from the ten-year study of competitive and cooperative activities among children and adolescents. The results were consistently in favour of cooperation across a range of criteria. Finally, it is widely believed that cooperation, especially when the groups are interdependent on each other to reach a goal, can reduce prejudice and discrimination between the groups. Allport (1954: 537) states that intergroup contact is one of the best ways to change the attitudes of members of one group towards the members of another. This is known as his 'contact hypothesis'. The basic idea is that if the groups are to work together to achieve their goal, then they will need to interact. This contact will reveal common interests between the groups. This is due to the nature of the superordinate goal. This contact will then also show the groups that the out-group is not homogenous and does not embody all the negative stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination they have towards it. This is due to increased personal contact with individual out-group members. This will eventually lead to a change in the attitudes and behaviour of the in-group to the out-group.

2.5.4 Factors Promoting Intergroup Cooperation

Nigerian language ethnic groups continue to coexist in a state of peaceful coexistence during the pre-colonial era. Nevertheless, during the colonial construction, the British determined that they themselves were going to find it challenging to administer Nigeria if the indigenous population were merged, both culturally and politically, into one bound entity. This, in turn, led to Nigeria's

segmentation into three divisions: North, West, and East. Nigerian independence in 1960 then led to a leadership struggle between the three divisions in attempts to gain control of the central government. It was the North that first gained power and set in motion the turn of events, which led to the destruction of intergroup relations and the foundations for intense intergroup violence.

The Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970 was a result of much turmoil and leadership within Nigeria (Ofili, 2016:173). It was fought between the secessionist state of Biafra (South East region) and Nigeria. The reasons for the Biafra secession were caused by a combination of major leadership issues, from the overthrow of the central government to the major pogroms inflicted on the Igbo people residing in the North. The war itself was a response to the Biafran attempt to secede, in fear it would lead to the disintegration of the newly formed Nigerian state. Throughout the years since the civil war, many Ibo still reflect and express the feelings of prejudice caused by various statements made at the time or experiences of discrimination and violence done against them, either during the war itself, or events following it (Osadola, 2019:113). A tell-tale sign and probably the most prominent example of intergroup discrimination and violence is the events of the Civil War.

This major mismatch in power and resources coming from the North with its greater population and control of the central government led to a crushing defeat of the South and subsequent oppression of the Ibo people. This war would lead to the displacement of over 2 million southeasterners and heavy Igbo casualties in both military and civilian contexts. Failure, as well as the war and the continuing strive of its people to succeed in forming a secessionist state, left a bitter taste in the mouths of the Igbo people, a people who had been broken and needed a way to abolish the continual violence and discrimination they have faced from other groups in the quest for security and better treatment.

2.5.5 Successful Intergroup Cooperation Initiatives

Some of these instances have already been mentioned in the context of other discussions. For example, the internal peace-building measures initiated by the Tiv, Idoma, and Alore alliance (a mutual defence pact signed in 1990 and the initiation of an inter-communal consultative council involving 14 groups by the late 1990s). The alliance was formed to create cooperative measures to end the cycle of revenge and violence which had plagued relations between the Tiv and their

neighbors. The consultative council was to facilitate peaceful communication at a time when the different communal ethnic militias were not on speaking terms and were often coming into conflict at various flashpoints in the Middle Belt. These measures succeeded in greatly reducing the level of violence in both instances. This resulted in the Tiv and their neighbors being able to return to their various rural communities and an overall reduction in communal conflict in the Middle Belt. Another example is the fostering of understanding and cooperation in the various oil conflict arenas involving the state government in the Niger Delta and the multinational oil companies operating in that area. In the 1999-2002 period, the state government was generally more successful in creating alliances with other states to bargain with the federal government.

2.6 Ethnicity and Ethnic Groups

Both developed and developing countries attach significance to ethnicity in their political systems. While both modernization and dependency theorists recognise the existence of a manipulated false class consciousness perpetuated by elites in society, ethnicity continues to play a significant role in the social structure of several cultures worldwide. Dependency theorists believe that ethnicity would vanish as manipulative elites in society exploited false class awareness. Multiple scholars have put forward diverse interpretations of the term "ethnicity." As stated by Otite (2000:47), ethnicity may be seen as the discriminatory behaviour shown by individuals belonging to one group against those from other groups, based on diverse socio-cultural symbols. This concept emphasises that ethnicity is constructed and used as a means of rivalry and dispute, so suggesting that ethnicity is a social construct. Osaghae (1995:12) describes it as the strategic utilisation or activation of ethnic identity or distinction to obtain an advantage in situations including competition, rivalry, conflict, or cooperation. In his 1997 publication "Ethnicity: A Cultural Interpretation of Descent and Historical Tradition," Abbink presents a more moderate viewpoint compared to other scholars. He defines ethnicity as the cultural understanding of one's ancestry and historical customs, which distinguishes a particular group from others and is manifested through specific behaviours or styles. He further elucidates that it is a manifestation of broadened fictive kinship, which exhibits a fluctuating characteristic in an individual's cultural and historical essence, sometimes intersecting with geographical, political, and economic distinctions. According to him, this is due to the fluctuating nature of an individual's cultural and historical

essence. It is often a constituent of an individual's or collective's social identity that is manifested during periods of hardship, such as when they are subjugated, marginalised, or assimilated into a new group.

Bozorgmehr (1997:402) analyses the notion of ethnicity as a fluid and evolving phenomenon, rather than a static and unchanging one. He asserts that ethnicity is a societal creation that evolves gradually via the amalgamation of several national and international allegiances and identities. He contends that ethnicity may be shaped and reconfigured based on the social context, citing the cases of Sicilians and Neapolitans who assimilated into Italian identity in America. He used these examples to elucidate his argument. Furthermore, he identifies religion, geographical origin, and language as factors that may potentially be used to ascertain an individual's ethnicity. Mombeshora's (1990:441) study primarily focuses on the mobilisation aspect of ethnicity. He believes that ethnicity is the deliberate and personal understanding of differences between ethnic groups, which may be used to support and advance the interests of a particular ethnic group. These disparities include factors such as language, religion, and traditions.

People are influenced to adopt their ethnic identities via socialisation, even if ethnicity is a temporary occurrence that may become significant in some political contexts but not others. He asserts that an individual's ethnicity is comprised of symbolic markers or qualities, whether real or hypothetical, that are culturally defined and used in the delineation of group distinctions. The amalgamation of cultural elements, including languages or dialects, religion, customs, symbols, and values; geographical elements, such as region and location; and biological elements, such as kinship and ancestry, are the constituents that form these symbolic markers. These symbolic marks represent membership in an ethnic group and shape an individual's subjective self-definition. Hence, ethnicity encompasses both objective and subjective aspects since it pertains to the essence of belonging to a particular group and is characterised by various symbolic markers such as territory, historical background, and ethnic concerns.

In his work, White (2009:479) examines the instance of Rwanda to elucidate the process by which ethnicity was constructed and then used to incite collective action, ultimately resulting in genocide. This example serves to illuminate the essence of ethnicity by demonstrating its use. In pre-colonial Rwandan society, there was a flexible social barrier that was determined by one's employment.

This culture consisted of three distinct groups: the Twa, an indigenous population engaged in hunting; the Hutus, who were involved in farming; and the Tutsis, who practised pastoralism (cattle breeders). The Hutus and Tutsis were segregated into three discrete factions. German colonisation had a role in solidifying ethnic borders by contributing to the reconstruction of the history of the Tutsi people. This reconstruction portrayed the Tutsi as a separate Hamitic group that migrated from the north and conquered the Bantu-speaking Hutus. The effective establishment of control over Rwanda necessitated the deliberate construction of identities and ethnicities as a strategic tool.

Nagel (2006:3) diverges from the others by including the concept of sexuality in the discourse on ethnicity. He asserts that sexual orientation and ethnic origin synergistically create a barrier that both includes and excludes certain individuals and groups. According to his explanation, the construction of these ethno-sexual barriers involves a natural inclination to distinguish between those who are pure and those who are impure. This reinforces the division between "us" and "them", shaping feelings of sexual attraction and perceptions of desirability, catering to the perceived natural preferences of certain partners over others, and ultimately establishing a framework for selecting specific types of sexual encounters over others. She presents claims that highlight the following distinctions: our mothers are characterised as pure, virginal, and virtuous, while their women are depicted as promiscuous and degraded; our men are portrayed as potent, robust, and courageous, whereas their men are described as feeble, frail, and timid; our women are revered as the nurturers of the nation, while their women are seen as mere reproducers and temptresses; our men are celebrated for their virility, strength, and bravery, while their men are deemed impotent, weak, and cowardly; our women are regarded as the mothers. Although these affirmations have sexual connotations, they primarily function as a foundation for the development and use of ethnicity to advance the interests of a particular group. As to Nagel (1994:173), ethnicity arises from the actions undertaken by different ethnic groups as they shape and reshape their own self-identity and culture.

Ethnicity is created by external factors such as social, economic, and political events and individuals who influence and modify ethnic identities and definitions. In contrast, Lentz (1995:311) performs a socio-historical examination of ethnicity in Ghana and highlights that ethnicity is not an overarching and quasi-innate affiliation with a group but rather a social identity

formed within historical contexts. He argues that ethnicity is not synonymous with group membership.

Malesevic (2011:75) diverges from other researchers by emphasising the significance of ethnicity in both temporal and spatial contexts. He contends that ethnicity is a reality that requires elucidation. In essence, rather than ethnicity serving as a solution to an inquiry, it is an inquiry that necessitates a solution. Malesevic analyses the concept of ethnicity from both a historical and geographical standpoint. The "temporal dimension" of ethnicity refers to the idea that ethnicity may be seen as either a distinct historical phase in the development of a country or as a remnant of traditional practices that persist in the current day. The term "spatial dimension" pertains to ethnicity in contemporary times. He argues that there is a tendency to see ethnicity only in relation to cultural minorities or as a phenomenon exclusive to non-Western societies. His understanding of ethnicity is characterised by a narrow focus on cultural aspects, a belief in the influence of historical factors, a tendency to analyse in a limited and specific manner, and a rigid emphasis on collective identity. He formulates this idea by considering the time-related and location-related aspects of ethnicity. An assertion that ethnicity is a political endeavour dependent on distinct cultural indicators of socioeconomic and ethnic groupings rather than encompassing the whole population is an effort to strike a balance between the two extremes.

Hunt and Evans (2011:14) argue that ethnicity is not fixed, but rather, it is temporary and constructed. This enables people to transcend the essentialist concepts of ethnic identity, which are unchanging. Their study focused on the experiences of a hundred young Asians who engaged in the dance club rave scene. The researchers examined the impact of drug use and consumption habits on the formation of Asian-American identity. They also explored how lifestyle choices, involvement in the dance scene, and consumption of goods contribute to the development and comprehension of ethnic identities. More precisely, their investigation focused on the influence of drug use and other consuming habits on the formation of Asian-American identity. They contend that an individual's identity is flexible, dependent on circumstances, and constantly evolving. Individuals construct their identities by forming interactions within and beyond their surroundings. The authors further explain that people possess the capacity to choose their identity from a range of choices that are rooted in either nationality or pan-ethnicity. These judgements are made within the context of institutionalised racism and the more restrictive classifications of those who are

considered outsiders. Asian individuals residing in the United States actively navigate the process of negotiating their own identity, especially in response to the prevailing influence of American identity. The bargaining occurs via the Asians' participation in certain networks, enabling them to prioritise and protect their identities.

Within the realm of farmer-pastoralist disputes, it is essential to do an academic study to examine the importance of ethnicity and the marginalisation of social identity. Unlike in Eastern Africa, where indigenous pastoralist societies like the Abakuria, Samburu, Pokot, Turkana, Maasai, Toposa, and Dassenatch exist in Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and South Sudan, the Fulani in specific parts of West Africa have historically been considered foreigners and outsiders due to their lack of native status and citizenship. This has been the case since the Fulani do not speak the local language. Consequently, there are regular limitations and, in some instances, refusals regarding the availability, entitlement, and utilisation of resources, as well as the possession of property. Land ownership is sometimes withheld in certain instances. Based on the results of a survey conducted by Pelican (2008), it is common for Cameroonians to see the Mbororo agro-pastoralists residing in the Western Grassfields of North-West Cameroon as a foreign community. These Cameroonians believe that the Mbororo originated from a certain region in West Africa. Pelican notes that while the Cameroonian government acknowledges their identification, they nevertheless have restricted access to land and other natural resources despite being citizens of the nation (Bukari, 2017:48).

In West African nations like Niger, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Mali, the Fulani people, despite their assimilation, are still seen as foreigners, settlers, and non-indigenous individuals, even though Fulani people are native to these nations. Their rights to hold land and other natural resources are vulnerable to limitations and disputes. The predominant nature of relations between Fulani herders and local populations in Ghana is sometimes characterised as "stranger-indigene," "host-guest," "indigene-alien," or "local people-foreigners." Bukari and Schareika (2015:7) and Tonah (2002:12, 2005:18) have conducted research that reveals a significant level of local bias and prejudice against Fulani herders. Furthermore, there exists a substantial amount of discrimination and hostility directed at Fulani herdsmen. The prevalence of disagreements between farmers and Fulani herders is substantially influenced by local prejudices, worries about citizenship status and rights, and the phenomena of "othering".

A significant portion of the scholarly discourse surrounding the origins of farmer-herder conflicts has predominantly concentrated on the early phases of conflict initiation, neglecting to examine the subsequent dynamics and progression that contribute to its escalation. Numerous scholarly investigations pertaining to conflicts between the two groups, as well as the involved disputants or factions, sometimes overlook the examination of the subsequent consequences after incidents such as crop destruction. Several actions and events that occur after a singular occurrence, such as farm and crop destructions, play a significant role in instigating the development of a war. The omission of factors such as group mobilisation and the progressive evolution of conflict, as highlighted by Moritz (2010), is frequently observed. The present study aims to address the existing gap in the literature. In their study, Le Meur and Hochet (2010) highlight the inherent challenges in theorising disputes between farmers and herders. They argue that the complexity and diversity of the individuals, causes, and dynamics involved make this task particularly arduous. Consequently, they contend that a comprehensive elucidation of the rise of farmer-herder conflicts necessitates the incorporation of many theoretical frameworks.

2.7 The History of farming in Benue State

Benue State, often referred to as the "Food Basket of the Nation," has a long-standing agricultural history that is deeply intertwined with its socio-economic and cultural identity. Several studies exploring the history of farming in Benue State encompass precolonial agrarian systems, the impact of colonial policies, postcolonial developments, and the challenges posed by modernization and climate change.

Studies on precolonial farming practices in Benue State emphasize the sustainability of indigenous systems. According to Adamu (2015), the Tiv, Idoma, and other ethnic groups in the region developed shifting cultivation, intercropping, and the use of organic fertilizers. These techniques were adapted to the region's fertile soil and seasonal rainfall patterns. Similarly, Udeh (2018) discusses the socio-cultural significance of yam cultivation, which was not only a staple food but also a symbol of wealth and social status among the Tiv people. These works underscore the environmental harmony achieved by indigenous agricultural practices.

The colonial period brought significant changes to farming practices in Benue State. Ochayi (2019) highlights how colonial administrators introduced cash crops like cotton and groundnuts, often at

the expense of local food production. These policies disrupted traditional farming practices and shifted the focus to export-oriented agriculture. Furthermore, the colonial government established plantation systems, which led to the exploitation of local farmers and altered rural labor dynamics. However, Ochayi's work is critiqued for its limited focus on local resistance to colonial agricultural policies.

Ayegba (2020) complements these findings by examining the establishment of cooperative societies during the colonial era, aimed at increasing agricultural productivity. While these cooperatives initially appeared beneficial, they often reinforced colonial economic interests rather than addressing the needs of local farmers. Post-independence, Benue State witnessed significant transformations in its agricultural sector. As Ayuba (2021) notes, government policies aimed at modernizing agriculture, such as the Green Revolution and Operation Feed the Nation, were introduced. While these initiatives increased mechanization and access to fertilizers, their implementation often neglected smallholder farmers. Additionally, corruption and mismanagement undermined their effectiveness.

Okoh (2022) focuses on the impact of rural-urban migration on farming in Benue State. He argues that the migration of young people to urban areas has led to labor shortages in rural communities, affecting agricultural productivity. This theme is particularly relevant given the demographic changes and socio-economic pressures facing the region today. Umeh (2020) addresses the under-researched area of women's contributions to agriculture in Benue State. Her study highlights the dual role of women as farmers and household managers, emphasizing their participation in crop production, processing, and marketing. Despite their contributions, Umeh notes that women face systemic barriers, including limited access to land, credit, and technology. These challenges have implications for gender equity and agricultural productivity in the region.

Recent studies have shifted focus to the effects of climate change on farming in Benue State. Ayuba (2021) discusses the increasing unpredictability of rainfall patterns and the rise in extreme weather events, which threaten traditional farming practices. His work underscores the importance of adaptive strategies, such as drought-resistant crops and irrigation systems, to mitigate these challenges. Similarly, Okoro (2023) explores the historical resilience of Benue's farmers to environmental changes, linking indigenous practices to contemporary adaptation efforts. However,

his work calls for more empirical research on the intersection of climate science and agricultural history in the region.

Many studies rely on historical and ethnographic methods, drawing from archival records, oral histories, and field surveys. For example, Adamu (2015) combines oral interviews with archival research to provide a comprehensive account of precolonial farming systems. However, some scholars, like Udeh (2018), critique the over-reliance on secondary data, arguing for more participatory research involving local farmers. While the reviewed works contribute significantly to understanding the history of farming in Benue State, several gaps remain: Limited exploration of precolonial trade networks and their influence on agriculture; Insufficient focus on youth engagement in farming, especially in the context of modernization; and Lack of interdisciplinary approaches that integrate historical, economic, and environmental perspectives.

2.8 The History of Fulani Expansion in Nigeria.

The Fulani ethnic group, often referred to as Fulbe, is an ethnolinguistic community that is spread out throughout fifteen different countries in the African region. Fulani is also a frequent name for the Fulani ethnic group. According to Miller (2007), a considerable number of Fulbe speakers, reaching about 13 million individuals, were dwelling within a vast geographical stretch greater than 3000 miles. This region encompassed the northern territory of Mauritania all the way down to the southern region of Cameroon. Additionally, it stretches from the eastern boundaries of Sudan all the way to the western areas, including Nigeria and Senegal. The Fulani people have a rich historical heritage of engaging with other communities because of their vast regional dispersion. This is particularly true of communities whose primary economic activity revolves around horticulture and agriculture.

Davidheiser and Luna (2008:99) have suggested that the Fulani people have a traditional background in pastoralism. Despite this, it is important to point out that a sizeable proportion of Fulbe speakers are engaged in activities that go beyond the scope of pastoralism and the trade of animal products. As the Fulani population continues to grow in certain regions, a significant number of people have begun pursuing careers as shopkeepers and dealers in response to the need for their services. In addition, in recent years, a sizeable percentage of the Fulani population has

shifted their primary means of subsistence from hunting and gathering to agriculture and horticulture. However, there is a strong association between the Fulani ethnic group and the practice of herding, as a considerable proportion of modern-day Fulani people continue to engage in pastoralism. This is one of the reasons why the Fulani ethnic group is one of the largest in Africa.

Furthermore, the nomenclature attributed to these entities across different countries provides insights into the magnitude of their habitats. As an illustration, in the Chad region and eastern areas, the ethnic group is frequently identified as Fellata, whereas among the Mande residing in the far western regions, they are recognised as Fula (Barth, 1957:33, as cited in Fricke, 1993). Due to their extensive migratory patterns, the Fulani people traversed the Sudanese region extensively, spanning from Senegal to the Upper Nile region, covering a vast expanse from west to east. The historical evidence confirms that the Fouta Djallon region is the sole confirmed origin of the group in question. According to Fricke's (1993:62) report, these individuals have been progressively dispersing from this area since the seventh century. In the 13th century, the Fulani successfully established peaceful interactions with the Hausa States, resulting in their integration into the region. According to Fricke (1993:79), historical documents from the 15th century point to the presence of Fulani tribes in the region of Baguirmi, which is situated in the central part of the Sudan. He stated further that a sizeable number of them were driven to relocate from Baguirmi to the more mountainous districts of Cameroon. Because of the inflow of immigrants from the Western region in the early 16th century and continuing into the 17th century, the Fulani population experienced consolidation during this period. This unplanned migration finally led to the Fulani people establishing themselves as the dominant group by the beginning of the 19th century (Agbegbedia 2013:222).

In Nigeria, the Fulani people have become a prominent ethnic group, and they are widely distributed and densely inhabited in the northern region of Nigeria. Regardless of the presence or absence of a specific reason, these groups are linked to and associated with cattle herding and pastoralism in the northern region and the middle-belt area of the country. The exact chronology of the Fulani pastoralists' arrival in Nigeria is uncertain; nonetheless, it is widely acknowledged that they migrated as nomads to the northern regions during the 16th or 17th century. During the early period, it is evident that their movements were significantly limited to a confined region

around the present-day northern border of Nigeria (Blench, 1990:48). The factors contributing to the Fule's limited expansion beyond this geographical boundary remain a subject of scholarly discussion. However, it is plausible that any endeavours to surpass this line would have resulted in substantial losses due to trypanosomiasis.

The arrival of the Fulani in major towns in the North, where they took on various professional responsibilities such as warriors, courtiers, and artisans, had a disruptive rather than harmonious impact, contrasting with the peaceful integration of independent cattle herders. According to Fricke (1993:157), the native Hausa upper class demonstrated a tendency to dismantle or expel the latter, along with the remaining Fulani population, in competition with the educated and adaptable immigrant upper class. During the 18th century, the Fulani population once again constituted a significant minority inside the Hausa States, as well as in the Borno and Jukun empires. In addition to being pastoralists, there existed among them a group of individuals comprising Islamic scholars and artisans. Despite their presence, these individuals found themselves in a disadvantaged position within the prevailing social structure. Rather than assimilating through adaptation, they maintained their distinct status by upholding their Islamic beliefs.

The emergence of Islam throughout the 18th century further accentuated the pariah status that Trimingham (1962:155) describes. In the year 1804, Osman dan Fodio, a preacher hailing from the urban Fulani tribe of Torobe in the Sokoto Province, declared a religious conflict, commonly referred to as *Jihad*, after being compelled to escape from the King of Gobir. The Hausa States underwent conquest during a very short span of time. Drawing upon the preexisting territorial and aristocratic structure, Osman established a conceptualised state in which he assumed the dual role of Sultan of Sokoto-Gwandu, serving as both the leader of the faithful and the political authority (Fricke, 1993:56). Fricke (1993:72) stated further that it was observed that by 1831, about fifteen emirates following the Mohammedan faith, under the leadership of Sokoto, exerted dominion over a landmass spanning approximately 280,000 square kilometres, accommodating a population of approximately five million individuals. The effective administrative system of the Hausa States, over which they had previously assumed control, supported the Fulani.

The expansion of political conquest in the southern region had some influence on the hierarchical tribute system that the empire and its emirates formed. This change had an impact on both the

highest-ranking officials of the Hausa towns and states as well as the lower administrative centres. The Fulani constituted the dominant social group in the rural regions, assuming a position of political authority and influence. The phenomenon has continued to exhibit efficacy in relation to the societal framework of Central and Western Nigeria, as well as the Middle Belt region, persisting till the current era. Villages were granted to both urban Fulani individuals and Fulani herdsmen as a form of recompense for their contributions to conquest and warfare.

The Hausas were coerced into paying tribute to the ruling authority and allocating territory so that enslaved communities might be established there. In tandem with the Fulani governance's political and organisational developments, which were marked by the construction of a centralised empire and the dissemination of their religious and educational practices, a portion of the workforce was forcibly mobilised through slavery (Agbegbedia, 2013:65). This enabled the Fulani to pursue their political and organisational goals. In addition, the implementation of mandatory conversion and the purchase of a workforce hampered the growth of areas that had previously been autonomous. Enslaved people who converted to Islam were granted their freedom, which resulted in the development of a wide variety of different social classes. This fact is very important and should not be overlooked. Most people in this class achieved stability and support through their relationships with powerful people, becoming those people's customers in the process. Furthermore, because of the upper class' monopoly on land ownership, their dependence on the middle and upper classes was further strengthened.

2.9 Land Tenure System and Land Use in Nigeria

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines land as the portion of the earth's surface that is not covered by water. It is the area of the earth's surface that a person owns, particularly as a piece of real estate that is for sale or purchase (Hornby, 2006:827). These definitions are appropriate for the purpose of understanding land disputes. Adekunle (2006:2) opined that the common man thinks of land as the element that alone covers the surface of the earth because of the definitions of land that have been presented above. Therefore, he considers land to include not just the surface of the world but also the inside of the planet's crust and the interior of the earth itself, all the way down to its core. It also includes the area that lies above the ground and extends upwards to a certain point at a fair distance.

Black's Law Dictionary defines land as "the substance that makes up the earth, including soil, rock, and other components." The materials in question may consist of dirt, rock, or other things. As defined by Bryan (1990:877), air space includes both vacant and inhabited space extending infinitely above and below. However, it is important to note that legal limitations on air space usage may exist, and legal rights on its use may be granted.

According to this interpretation of what constitutes land, everything that is fastened to the soil is a component of the land. Although initially introduced and applied in English law, this concept has been adopted in Nigerian land law. According to Adekunle (2006:190), it is established that anything attached to the land is legally considered a part of it and is subject to the same property rights as the land itself. If a person constructs on his own property using another person's materials, then according to the law, the owner of the land also becomes the owner of the structure constructed on his land. In addition, if seeds were sown or trees were planted on another person's property, the owner of the land would also become the owner of the trees, plants, or seeds as soon as they had taken root. This would be the case regardless of what has been planted (Adekunle, 2006:192).

Nonetheless, the definition of a term in English law and the meaning of a term in Nigerian customary law are not identical. According to the traditional Nigerian ideals, land consists of nothing more than the soil itself. In other words, anything that is linked to the land, such as houses, trees, and other such fittings, is not considered to be part of the land itself.

The significance of land in Africa cannot be overstated, as it serves as a crucial resource for rural communities, providing sustenance, grazing areas, and other natural assets that are essential for the livelihoods and sustainability of farmers and herders. Nevertheless, the matter of land in Africa is characterised by its inherent difficulty and complexity. The complexity of the subject stems from the dual nature of ownership, which is believed to encompass both physical possessions, often shared by the community or family, and spiritual connection, involving the influence of ancestors. Furthermore, this item retains its status as the most highly prized tangible asset that individuals can lay claim to. According to Lund (2011:73), the increasing strain on land resources, disputes related to land, and the mobilisation of political forces have collectively elevated the significance of land rights as a critical political concern.

According to Da Rocha and Lodoh (1999), it is evident that Africa has a wide range of land tenure systems that exhibit significant variations across different regions. Land tenure refers to the legal and social structures and arrangements that govern land ownership, utilisation, and transfer. In the context of landownership tenure, it is necessary for an individual to provide evidence that there is a lack of reasonable likelihood of the presence of a superior adverse claim to their own claim, as well as to establish a historical record of possession of the land for a significant duration through their predecessors (Da Rocha & Lodoh, 1999:56). Most of the land in various regions of Africa is held under customary tenure, a system that is governed by traditional and traditional regulations (Kasanga & Kotey, 2001:32; Kasanga, 1988:17). Land tenure security is an essential aspect of any land tenure system since it provides individuals with the necessary assurance regarding their rights to utilise and exercise control over their land.

An early analysis of land tenure systems and policies in sub-Saharan African countries throughout the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras reveals a transition in land tenure and ownership from a traditional structure to a somewhat modernised one. However, it is worth noting that customary holdings continue to be the prevailing system in practice. According to Muwonge (2009:12), communal, clan-based, and familial structures governed the distribution and management of land resources during the pre-colonial era. These structures were established with the purpose of safeguarding and ensuring the rights of both individuals and the community to access and utilise these resources. According to Muwonge (2009:11), the allocation of land was determined by customary practices and traditions, with the understanding that it belonged to the entire community. Colonial governments implemented land reforms during the colonial era, drawing inspiration from European views on land ownership. These reforms aimed to safeguard European interests and grant them the most extensive set of rights feasible within the imposed legal frameworks (Economic Commission for Africa, 2007). The systems of tenure in question were established on the principles of freehold and leasehold. The land reforms implemented by post-colonial administrations were designed with the objective of nationalising land tenure regimes and integrating modern and customary systems. Numerous legislative measures were implemented to facilitate the consolidation and efficiency of land tenure systems. For example, to enhance the efficiency of land tenure in Ghana, Ghana implemented the Land Administration Project (LAP) in 2007, which lasted for 15 years. The project, currently in its second phase, has multiple objectives,

one of which is to mitigate the issue of duplicated land registration and titles to prevent land conflicts. Nevertheless, the Land Administration Project (LAP) fails to adequately address the concerns and complexities associated with pastoralism within its land use planning framework (Kaderi, 2017:63).

According to Peluso and Lund (2011:680), disputes regarding land are not solely centred around land utilisation but instead revolve around issues of power dynamics and property rights. The claim contends that ownership rights and the desire for control over property, rather than the intrinsic value of the land and its resources, are the leading causes of land conflicts. In the pursuit of land ownership, individuals want to attain control over this valuable resource since it serves as a mechanism for exerting authority and establishing property rights. Consequently, this endeavour engenders heightened competition among individuals, ultimately resulting in conflicts. Hence, the issue of land disputes between farmers and herders extends beyond mere rivalry over land and its resources. Inherent within land conflicts are issues that were identified by Wehrmann (2008:42) as “*social relations of power and influence*”. The conflicts pertaining to power dynamics do not exclusively involve local farmers and pastoralists but rather encompass disputes among indigenous community members. According to Wehrmann (2008:49), land conflicts typically involve two parties engaged in disputes about various aspects of land ownership, including property rights, land use, land management, exclusionary rights, transferability, and entitlement to compensation.

According to Beyene (2014:66), the impact of developing concerns about land use practices on the management of rangelands and the sustainable utilisation of natural resources in arid regions is substantial. According to him, conflicts pertaining to land between pastoralists and other societal groups arise in situations where a substantial population of animals exists, and community grazing practices are extensively observed.

Customary land tenure systems are commonly associated with significant degrees of insecurity pertaining to customary lands (Yaro, 2010:211). Pastoralists constitute a considerable demographic that experiences substantial challenges pertaining to land insecurity. The issue of land tenure security among most pastoralists in Africa continues to be a major factor contributing to disputes between farmers and pastoralists. n (2012) observed that in previous times, pastoralists were able to utilise extensive areas of rangeland, which were effectively governed by customary

institutions operating at various levels and for diverse resources. He stated further that the availability of unrestricted land access has diminished for most pastoralists because of the transition from a traditional land tenure system to one characterised by increased private ownership. Consequently, impoverished herders are left with either smaller plots of land or no land at all. This situation has led to a state of land instability among pastoralists, with few efforts made to effectively mitigate the challenges they encounter.

In the Nigerian context, the idea of "land" is imbued with religious connotations in addition to socio-political connotations, according to which land is considered identical to a nation of people, a town, or a community (International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, 1972:435; Ekong, 2003 and Nwabuaze, 1974;). As explained by Beatie (1964), land has evolved into a kind of private investment since it is a commercial resource with the fewest demands. The reformation of land, in its many historical manifestations, has taken on different forms according to the various roles that land itself has played. When the relative worth of land increases, it becomes a more contentious issue among the many economic and social groups that are present in society (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1945:634). Land is a commodity that is essential to every economic system. For agriculturally based economies, its significance cannot be overstated. Thus, land ownership is essential for farmers, pastoralists, and hunting tribes alike. Yet, the sorts of economies that a society has will determine the specific interest that society may have in land. In certain societies, land provides the means for people to survive. According to Otite (1999:22), indigenous civilizations rely heavily on the land as their primary source of income and property. As a result, in many African countries, reference to the group's ancestral tombs or shrines reveals the lineage's dedication to its territory. This occurs because of a tradition that dates back centuries.

According to Jones (1949:313), land may be divided into four concepts. In the first place, he is the owner of all the land. In essence, no land is unoccupied. Secondly, regardless of whether a piece of land is currently being farmed or not, it still belongs to a particular family and cannot legally be transferred to another family or individual. Thirdly, every single member of the lineage has access to land that may be used for farming or any other uses. Finally, every single member of a family gets entry to the property. In other words, whether a person needs land or not, he has access to land, and his family carefully guards his share of the land. Dike (1985) argues that land may be divided into four categories: holy land, compound land, common land, and farmland. Common

land is the most frequent kind of land. Moreover, the traditional method of land ownership in Africa allows for the development of a subsistence economy, which is how individuals in Africa care for their families' nutritional needs.

Nevertheless, the growing population and the need for land for many purposes, such as urban development, cultivation of profitable crops, mining activities, and government infrastructure projects like schools, marketplaces, offices, and highways, have significantly heightened the significance of land. According to James (1973:16), instances of discontent and land conflicts arise when it is revealed that communal or individual land is unlawfully obtained and even sold, with the proceeds being used for personal gain. In addition, if the community needed to carry out an alienation, there used to be issues around how to ensure that all the members of the lineage were informed and participated before moving forward with any further actions on such a parcel of property. Oloyede (1971:17), in his essay titled "Judicial resolution of boundary disputes," highlights the reasons why there is a lack of land. This work seems to have a stance that is comparable to James'. He claims that Nigeria is seeing unparalleled population growth, resulting in the issue of a community being too big for its land to sustain while other cities or villages may have available land. This issue has led to the challenge of a town expanding to a size where its land is insufficient to sustain it. Although some people are suffering from a lack of sufficient space inside their own area for farming and other activities, the people who live nearby may have extra space, yet this land cannot be encroached upon. In this scenario, the borders of such territories are redrawn either peacefully or, often, by violent means.

2.9.1 The Nigerian Land Use Act of 1978

The Land Use Act of 1978 is widely regarded as one of the most despised pieces of legislation in Nigeria's history. Furthermore, it has garnered the most negative feedback and scrutiny from Nigerian residents. The legislative action, which was introduced by the government, has received little appreciation from many segments of Nigerian society, as mentioned in Adekunle's study (2006:189). Because of this legislation, the ownership of all land in the state is transferred to either the military or the executive governor of each distinct state. Consequently, the government holds the land in trust and oversees its management to ensure its productive use and equitable benefits

for all Nigerians. The prevailing agreement was that all forms of traditional land ownership regimes were outdated and unable to fulfil the demands of a rapidly evolving agricultural sector.

- a. According to Article 5 of the Act, the governor has the authority to determine the principles of property ownership, the powers of the government, and the rights of those who occupy the land, regardless of whether it is in an urban area or not. Article 5 of the Act; to confer legal entitlements of tenancy to any individual for all purposes.
- b. To authorise the granting of easements in accordance with legal rights of occupation.
- c. To request payment of rent for any land that has been given to an individual.
- d. To amend the lease agreement:
 - i. at defined intervals indicated in the certificate of occupancy or
 - ii. if no intervals are specified in the certificate, at any time throughout the duration of the statutory right of occupation.
- e. (Impose a penalty for violating any regulation stated in a certificate of occupancy that mandates the holder to enhance or develop the designated land specified in the certificate of occupancy and adjust the penalty in accordance with the provisions outlined in Section 19 of this legislation.

Many people believed that the Act was created with the intention of robbing landowners of their natural endowments. It was perceived as a significantly powerful instrument intended to thoroughly destabilise the sacred and revered institution of kinship, especially in countries where land had been intricately linked to the institution since ancient times. Adekunle (2006:190) referenced Olatuwura's assertion that the Land Use Act is an extraneous legislation owing to its transformative aspects. These provisions significantly impact certain households and groups of individuals who rely on these lands for their livelihood or sustenance. Adekunle agreed with this viewpoint and referenced Olatuwura's comments. Undoubtedly, many provisions of the Land Use Act, particularly Section 36, are very burdensome for a considerable portion of traditional or customary landowners, irrespective of the validity of their claims. Despite the numerous criticisms, the Federal Government continues to defend the necessity of this Act. They even assert in the Act's

introduction that it is in the best interest of all Nigerians to have access to and benefit from the land and its abundant produce. This was explicitly mentioned in the Act.

The Nigerian Land Use Act of 1978, together with alterations in the jurisdiction of local governments, has significantly shifted the balance of power in a manner that is detrimental to pastoralists. The Decree stipulated that the Federal Government had exclusive ownership of all land and revoked the power of traditional chiefs and other community leaders to allocate assets that were no longer in use or had been abandoned. Pursuant to the decree, the Governor of the State is granted the authority to allocate a maximum of 5000 hectares of land for agricultural or industrial purposes, while the Chairman of each local government is granted the same authority over 500 hectares of land (Section 6, Subsection 2, 1978 Land Use Act). Traditional leaders lost the ability to levy fines and put people in jail because of reforms to local government, which rendered their function more ceremonial than functional. However, in many locations in the north, the position of local government chairman has effectively displaced them, even though chiefs are still afforded respect in some locations. Because of this, pastoralists constantly have the impression that choices are made against them, and they believe that even an agreement that has been in place for a long time might be broken for the sake of short-term political benefit.

2.10 Nomadic Pastoralism

Over the course of history and the spread of civilization, several communities have gained recognition as pastoral due to their exceptional expertise in cow husbandry. The Andean herders in South America, namely in Bolivia and Peru, are known for raising llamas and alpacas. The savannas of West Africa are inhabited by Fulani cattle breeders, who are among the other herders in the region (Stenning in Salzman, 2002:36). Cattle possess mobility due to their ability to roam, in contrast to land, water sources, orchards, and mineral sources. This stands in contrast to the lack of movement shown by these other categories of resources. To engage in pastoralism, which entails using the abundant natural pasture that is dispersed over the terrain, it is necessary to relocate the animals from places devoid of usable pasture. The fundamental impetus for the movement of herders and their livestock is the need to use pasture for the sustenance of the cattle. This migration is further impacted by climatic factors such as temperature, disease, and the repercussions of climate change (Salzman 2002:3).

Nomadic pastoralism is a socio-economic approach that revolves around mobility patterns, particularly seasonal, and the management and care of domesticated animals (Lottimore, 1940:54, Khazanov 1994:17 and Barth 1964:11). It occurs in regions where plant growth is irregular and can only happen when the specific requirements of rainfall and temperature are satisfied. However, migration is the one feasible choice for use land that is exclusively utilised as grazing during certain seasons. According to some scholars, there is a belief that the terms nomadism and pastoralism, which include raising animals (Salzman 2002: 345), are synonymous and may be used interchangeably.

The word "nomadism" has been used by scholars like Bernbeck (2008) and Salzman (2002: 245) to describe a lifestyle characterised by constant movement. This concept is closely associated with other mobility strategies, such as hunting and foraging. Therefore, the term "nomadic" is often used to describe the act of moving or being mobile, but "pastoralism" pertains to a productive economic approach, including the rearing of animals on natural pastures. Both phrases are synonymous. Due to historical developments, pastoralists have migrated to other communities and engaged in interactions and exchanges with individuals from other groups.

However, the herding technique is always adapting and changing because of the inherent dangers and potential outcomes resulting from the political, social, and economic interactions between pastoralists and the civilizations in which they reside. Fulani herders use natural grazing pastures for the purpose of raising livestock. This suggests that the grasses and plants on these pasturelands are neither cultivated nor maintained by humans. Therefore, several scholars, like Salzman (2002:2), argue that pasturelands are deliberately cultivated and preserved to facilitate animal grazing in certain locations. Consequently, farmers who exchange their agricultural products with herders, as shown in the case of settled crop farmers, have the potential to gain financial advantages.

The Fulanis are widely acknowledged in Nigeria as breeders since they get their livelihood from it and possess expertise in the field. Salzman (2002:12) attributes the responsibility of cow breeding in the West African savanna to the Fulani herders. Salzman postulated that the existence of various categories of pastoralists is contingent upon the specific social structure in which they are situated. In tribal pastoralist cultures, individuals reside inside a political entity, actively

participate in collective duties, and assume the dual roles of safeguarding and fulfilling commitments towards fellow members. Each herder exhibits unwavering loyalty to the tribe, the highest governing body that offers them both the legal framework and the traditional laws specific to their circumstances. Peasant pastoralists live in a complex society that is governed by institutions. These individuals provide taxes to the government and are obligated to comply with its laws and regulations (Salzman, 2002:13). Khazanov (1984) states that the migration of pastoralists is periodic and aligns with the economic requirements imposed on them inside grazing fields. Herds are supervised by herders who possess expertise in herd management. Their principal source of revenue is derived from it, and they adapt their grazing habits to suit both their subsistence and commercial needs.

2.11 Pastoralism and Herding in Nigeria

In Nigeria, there exists a limited population of pastoral people, including the Fulbe, tribes associated with the Kanuri, the Yedina, the Shuwa, and the Uled Suleiman. The individuals in question are often referred to as the Fulbe. However, the Fulbe (Fulani) are the most populous and widespread group. Over the last millennium, they have migrated eastward from the Gambia River and maybe launched an invasion of Nigeria in the fourteenth century. The Fulbe ethnic group is often referred to as the Fulani (Moritz, 2003:1). The Nigeria Fulbe have been extensively studied by many distinguished authors, particularly de St. Croix (1994), Hopen (1958), and Stenning (1959), who mostly examine the pastoral clans inhabiting semi-arid areas. Insufficient descriptive data are accessible for the humid and sub-humid regions. The Fulbe people residing in the Jos Plateau are examined in Awogbade's work (1983), whereas the investigations in Blench's publication (1999) focus on the pastoralists in southern Zaria.

Conversely, the Shuwa, Koyan and related populations have consistently occupied in the semi-arid area around Lake Chad. They only engage with farmers from their own ethnic group who cultivate crops near river valleys or practise catch-cropping at the base of dunes. Nonetheless, the Uled Suleiman, a group of Libyan camel herders who now migrate between Niger and north-east Nigeria, have evolved remarkable adjustments to cope with the alterations in the ecology and the pressure on grazing resources. The desiccation of the Hadeja-Nguru wetlands due to excessive water extraction (Blench, 2003) has been advantageous for the Uled Suleiman community since it

has rendered certain areas of the region available for camels throughout the arid season. Consequently, the Uled Suleiman have extended their territorial boundaries towards the southern region. Unlike the other pastoral groups in Nigeria, the Fulbe or Fulani have experienced unique and significant expansion. Thus, disagreement, which is prevalent among the Fulbe, is typically not perceived as a problem.

Mixed farming has emerged because of historical development and the distinct agricultural practices of field agriculture and pastoral economy. This may be inferred from the account of historical development. In the past, full-time pastoralists were unable to maintain their nomadic lifestyle, which was crucial for large-scale pastoral economies since they held control over field cultivators or were motivated by economic reasons to participate in full-time pastoralism. As a result, they were unable to participate in extensive agricultural economies. The rinderpest epidemics in the late 19th century likely had a compounded effect on herd losses, particularly for the Fulani people who were still engaged in full-time pastoralism and did not see much improvement in their situation. However, they made a strong effort to regain their status as full-fledged pastoralists, using all available resources to the best of their capabilities.

Former nomadic herders who shift to a settled lifestyle, engaging in cattle farming as part of a diversified agricultural system, also adopt a new way of life, resulting in the demise of their ancestral customs and language. The erosion of their ancestral customs and language is evident in this novel manner of living. Fricke (1993:113) highlights the many manifestations that have arisen in the western Fulani area due to the contact between Fulani pastoralists and hoe cultivators from different ethnic backgrounds in Senegal. These diverse forms have emerged because of the interaction between the two groups. These behaviours may include the oppression of Fulani individuals residing in isolated regions, thereby rendering them "captives" of the inhabitants in more established communities. The union of Hausa women and Fulani men in northern Nigeria typically has unfavourable outcomes, since it is primarily the Hausa woman's duty to raise the children. Consequently, the younger cohort lacks exposure to the language and customs of the Fulani people. This results in a disparity in cultural comprehension across different generations. This is particularly apparent in the Hausa-Fulani states and certain regions of Benue state. In the Hausa-Fulani states, as well as in some areas of Benue state. Norman (1972:212) and Van Raay (1975) have said that the Hausa culture assimilated the Fulani people in Zaria, and they engaged

in mixed farming. Consequently, the Fulani residing in Zaria are regarded as members of this group.

Conversely, in areas where the Fulani people have established colonies, those Fulani individuals who continue to engage in cattle herding as a component of a diversified economy have managed to maintain their language. Furthermore, in some parts of Bauchi, they have even compelled the local population to embrace their language. Fricke (1993:65), citing Hopen (1959), contends that among the Fulani people, males often take over the task of milking due to their suspicion that women do not leave enough amount of milk for the calves. The reference to Hopen's argument can be seen in Fricke's 1993 publication. However, segregating women into distinct areas may also contribute to this phenomenon.

It is essential to keep a positive attitude towards the field of agriculture. Currently, this group is of great importance among plough farmers. This kind of farming, which involves a profitable aspect of raising livestock, is mostly carried out by Fulani people who cultivate fields. It is often conducted in sparsely populated areas with abundant pasture near isolated farmsteads and small villages. The animals may be temporarily kept in a field enclosure overnight, while the manure can be used beneficially in agricultural operations in the adjacent area. This is feasible for a substantial duration of the year. Frantz (1973:17) states that the territory surrounding Yola exhibits notable differences in relation to the extent of territorial control and the availability of grazing land and fields near residential areas.

Allan (1965:250) documented a distinctive correlation between Fulani livestock herders and field agriculture in the northwestern region of Ghana. This correlation was also seen in the Middle Belt area of Nigeria. The Fulani assume responsibility for the custodianship of cattle owned by non-Fulani settled communities, and they confine the animals near their established encampment throughout the night. In the wet season, the camp is relocated, and millet is cultivated on the fertile ground that the rain has enriched. As to Allan's (1965) findings, the yields gained from these fields in Ghana are around 35% higher compared to the yields obtained from crops grown on unfertilized fields. Because of this endeavour, the Fulani are now capable of employing labourers to work in their fields. This kind of diversified agriculture is mostly practised in the pastoralism activities conducted in Shuwa, situated in the southeastern region of Borno province. Located on the

outskirts of the flood plains of Lake Chad, most of the population lives in tiny settlements and villages, engaging in the cultivation of cotton, millet, groundnuts, maize, and vegetables on the fertile black and grey clay soils. The cattle are confined inside the hamlet, and in the case of a severe pest infestation, they are relocated inside the spacious residences. Night grazing is an additional tactic used to counter the presence of troublesome insects near the reed belt.

Herds are divided in a similar manner as explained for the Fulani when they were in that situation, even in areas where there is not enough food for the animals. In previous eras, slaves were used for agricultural work, constituting a larger proportion of the population than one-tenth. Although some manure is spread throughout the fields, a substantial quantity remains concentrated around the hamlet. Consequently, the crops grown in this region provide very high harvests. Therefore, the inhabited area of the Kuri and the Buduma very barely intersects with the island pastures of Lake Chad inside the borders of Nigeria. The coastline area and islands are mostly used for the cultivation of maize and wheat, which significantly influences the local inhabitants' lifestyle. Conversely, similar activity takes place on polders, namely in relation to cattle herding in the marsh meadows and in the reed belt, in addition to fishing in the open seas. Employed family members must relocate from permanent settlements during the dry season. Herders first led their animals on brief excursions, but as the wetlands become arid, they expand the area in which their animals roam. In contrast, there are other groups located outside the cities who mostly engage in fishing and agricultural work (Le Rouvreur in Fricke, 1993:47). Based on Fricke's (1993:114) observations and the accounts of early explorers, the Kanembu people residing on the north-western shore of Lake Chad have developed an economic framework that is well-suited to their local environment. Le Rouvreur in Fricke (1993: 32) characterises the non-lake region of the Republic of Chad as having a livestock economy equally significant as field cultivation. This economy is adapted to the specific ecological conditions of the Quaternary dune region. This economy considers the presence of sand dunes in the area.

To summarise, it is crucial to emphasise that a precise categorization of mixed cattle farming cannot be achieved with the existing data since these data do not account for any socio-economic agrarian distinctions. This is due to the absence of any indication of socioeconomic difference based on agriculture in the data. Within the Middle Belt region, one may witness the presence of either semi-sedentary or sedentary pastoralism around the southern edge of the Fulani distribution

area. Fricke (1993:109) attributes this phenomenon to the amalgamation of two distinct factors. Initially, just a fraction ranging from one-half to one-third of the total required grazing field is sufficient in this location, allowing for the possibility of restricting the punishment to a smaller area. Furthermore, the Middle Belt region has a concentrated population residing in a limited number of metropolitan centres. Consequently, it is often possible to find sufficient grazing land near appropriate market locations for milk.

The semi-sedentary full-time cattle breeder maintains a permanent camp during the wet season when he engages in hoe cultivation on the areas formerly occupied by his cow pens. This camp is situated in a region characterised by substantial precipitation. However, he cultivates only millet and calabashes, which provide a bountiful crop due to the application of manure. Throughout the rainy season, he mostly remains within this specific vicinity of the community. If the pasture and irrigation conditions are good, it is customary to extend one's stay in the dry-season area for a longer period. The Fulani people's nomadic tradition of building new homes in alignment with the changing seasons persists in the dry-season camp. If the need arises, the semi-nomadic cattle breeder, who devotes all their time to this occupation, has the adaptability to either resume a nomadic way of life or relocate to a different location. They possess a deep understanding of the importance of manure, so they diligently seek permission from the local village authorities to cultivate millet at the site of their temporary settlement during the dry season after they have relocated. Leaders of villages sometimes decline the offer for various reasons, such as harbouring enmity towards the Fulani, who were formerly their enemies, or recognising the significance of manure (Fricke, 1993:109–110).

Typically, many individuals who work as full-time pastoralists will eventually have to transition to a more sedentary lifestyle. This usually occurs when they reach an age where they can no longer physically handle the challenges of constant migration and when they pass on the responsibility of running the business to the next generation of their family. In this situation, the most seasoned member of the group is stationed in a specific camp consistently throughout the year, ensuring its readiness to function as a central camp for the clan during the rainy season. From this perspective, he may also supervise the cultivation of fields by individuals who get compensation for their work. This technique presupposes the presence of enough grazing land during the rainy season, as well

as nearby marketplaces where milk may be sold. During the time when people lived mostly in walled villages, these camps were also present in the now heavily populated northern area.

Nowadays, with a more distributed population throughout the area, most of these camps are in the less densely populated northern provinces and the Middle Belt regions. There is a likelihood that in the northeastern area, there exist certain groups of Shuwa Arabs that engage in vast semi-sedentary pastoralism as a prominent occupation. If the term "extended pastoral economy" were used, this scenario would apply. However, there has been a certain level of interbreeding between the imported species and the native population (Trimingham, 1962:17). Herders reside in permanent communities only during the rainy season, leading up to the harvest period. Due to the depletion of waterholes, the family and their animals relocate to a camp located farther south, which is typically used during the dry season. They remain there until the onset of the rainy season. The Shuwa, a semi-sedentary community, primarily focus on tending to their herds. Field cultivation is a secondary occupation that involves controlling the group's movement via set locations, as described by Fricke, who referenced Lebeuf (1959:95).

Stationary full-time pastoralism without extensive field agriculture is only likely to occur in conjunction with the seasonal split of the herd or transhumance. This is as a result of the substantial need for grazing land per livestock unit cannot be fulfilled near the settlement since the available land is shared with crop farmers, who are required to produce cereals in return for the milk produced by the herders. If it becomes necessary to divide the herd into two groups, the mature milking cows and the more seasoned family members will remain on the farm, while the younger cows will be moved to a different location along with the other animals.

2.12 Emergence of The Fulani Herders in Benue

The Fulani are a prominent ethnic group mostly concentrated in northern Nigeria, with a considerable presence in the Middle Belt area of the country. Regardless of the presence of any factual evidence, there is a clear connection between these locations and the practice of cow farming. Furthermore, the multitude of appellations assigned to them across several countries exemplifies the vastness of the areas where they may be found dwelling. For example, they identify themselves as Fulbe. To the region bordering Chad and to its eastern part, they are referred to as

Fellata, but in the far west of the nation, the Mande people refer to them as Fula (Barth in Fricke, 1993: 65). Due to a significant migration, the Fulani people relocated from Senegal to the Upper Nile region in the Sudanese zone. This event signalled the beginning of the Fulani's territorial expansion in that area. Based on Tauxier's findings (in Fricke, 1993: 25), the historical records confirm the original site of the Fouta Djalon as the birthplace of the group.

It is evident that they have been progressively expanding outside this region since the ninth century. Tauxier asserts that this is the one location where the historical confirmation of their provenance can be found. However, they managed to enter the Hausa republics in the 13th century without generating any problems, as documented by Hogben (1930:59), Palmer (1936:78), and Westermanni (1952:136), all cited in Fricke (1993). According to Fricke (1993:10), historical records indicate that in the 15th century, Fulani tribes resided in Baguirmi, a territory situated in central Sudan. He also states that a substantial proportion of them were subsequently resettled in the mountainous regions of Cameroon after their expulsion from Baguirmi. The influx of new immigrants from the western region resulted in the consolidation of the Fulani population in that area during the 16th and 17th centuries. This demographic shift, as documented by Palmer (1936:258), Duhring (1926:125), Fricke (1993), Kirkgreen (1958:22), and East (1994:21), ultimately led to the Fulani people emerging as the dominant group by the early 19th century.

The advent of the Fulani into cities, where they adopted specific occupational roles such as courtiers, warriors and artisans, caused greater disturbance compared to the comparatively peaceful presence of independent cattle farmers. Unsurprisingly, the competitive local Hausa upper class eradicated the educated, versatile, but alien upper elite, along with the remnant Fulani, to remove any competition (Fricke, 1993:157). During the 18th century, the Fulani people were a significant minority in the Hausa States, as well as in the Borno and Jukun empires. In addition to the pastoralists, there were also Muslim intellectuals and artists living among these people. These individuals were at a disadvantage in the current social structure since they failed to conform and integrate into it.

Consequently, they preserved their distinctive standing in the judicial system and urban areas by sticking to their Mohamedan beliefs, so enabling them to maintain their privileged position. Trimminghan (1962:155) asserts that the rise of Islam in the 18th century intensified the previously

existing marginalised position of Muslims at that period. Osman dan Fodio, a preacher hailing from the urban Fulani clan of Torobe in the Sokoto Province, declared a sacred crusade in 1804 after his forced flight from the monarch of Gobir. This occurrence took place in the Sokoto Province during the period of jihad.

The Hausa States succumbed to external domination within a brief span of time. Osman constructed a hypothetical nation that relied on the prevailing geographical and aristocratic structure. Osman had the dual role of being the ruler of the believers and the political overlord simultaneously in his position as the Sultan of Sokoto-Gwandu (Fricke, 1993:56). According to Fricke, in 1831, there were roughly 15 Muslim emirates under the rule of Sokoto, governing an area of over 280,000 square kilometres with a population of approximately 5 million people. The well-developed administrative apparatus of the Hausa States, which they had already gained control of, provided valuable assistance in their endeavour. The expansion of political dominance in the southern region had an impact on the establishment of a hierarchical system of tribute by the empire and its emirates. The information provided lacks a credible source to support its validity. The information provided lacks a reliable source to support its validity.

This shift had an impact not only on the dominant authorities in the Hausa States but also on the subordinate administrative centres. The Fulani had significant influence over the nation's rural areas as the prevailing social group. The socioeconomic structure of central and western Nigeria, as well as the Middle Belt region, has remained successful to this day. Villages were allocated to the Fulani people, both from urban areas and Fulani herders, as a reward for their valuable efforts throughout the conflict. They were compelled to pay tribute and provide land for the establishment of slave cities. These towns were constructed with enslaved people.

The advancement of Fulani rule, characterised by efficient governance of a vast empire and the widespread dissemination of their beliefs and knowledge, was accompanied by the coerced enslavement of a specific segment of the workforce and the disruption of development in previously autonomous regions through mandatory conversion and labour acquisition. Both circumstances resulted in a cessation of advancement in the regions that had maintained their autonomy. Upon embracing Islam, enslaved individuals were allowed emancipation, resulting in the emergence of a significant social group whose status was consistently ensured as the

dependents of influential individuals. Furthermore, an additional dependence was formed on the upper class' power to oversee the land.

The Fulbe people, historically, were nomadic and lived on the periphery of the desert for a considerable duration. However, starting in the 20th century, nomadic herders started migrating and establishing permanent residence in a previously inaccessible territory. This exposed them to people, societies, and even manufacturing methods that were unfamiliar to them. Consequently, there was an influx of unverified messages among all the individuals concerned, leading to a substantial potential for misinterpretation and discord. The reasons for their failure to extend southwards in a previous era are still a subject of discussion. However, attempting a migration from the semi-arid region would likely have led to substantial casualties owing to the trypanosomes (Blench, 1997:75). Prior to the widespread distribution of weapons in Nigeria, the human population density was regarded as low; however, the presence of wild animals remained notably substantial. As a result, the pastoralists faced a challenging scenario with the tsetse fly invasion due to the non-trypanotolerant zebu they owned (Blench, 1999:22). During the era of colonial authority, this journey was seen as a necessary route connecting the arid north with the drought-resistant grazing lands along the Niger-Benue system. Due to the escalating menace of the tsetse fly, pastoralists were compelled to relocate farther north as the intensity of the rainfall increased.

However, the continuous exploration of southern grasslands led to the establishment of a customary habit for those desiring such surroundings to permanently dwell in these areas during the whole year. Fricke's (1993) study on livestock production in Nigeria reveals that pastoralists have mostly shifted their herds to the southern parts of the nation. This conclusion is based on an analysis of tax and abattoir data. Essentially, there is a substantial decline in the population of pastoralists living in the northern region due to their yearly movement towards the southern region. Blench, Daniel and Hassan (2003:12) state that the conventional notions of pastoralism saw substantial transformation due to two main driving forces. One example of this is the movement towards the southwest of the nation, which occurred earlier compared to the country's central and southeast regions, mostly owing to ecological and cultural factors. Additional instances encompass this migration. The climate pattern in the southwest region is characterised by a Savannah that extends southwards to the west of Oyo State, passing close to the coast in Benin and the Togolese

Republic. The reason for this is the tropical climate of the Southwest. Consequently, the landscape that was formed was rather spacious, devoid of the excessive moisture often seen in dense forests, thereby reducing the probability of zebu livestock being ill.

The second contributing element was the exceptional degree of safety that characterised the whole duration of colonial governance. The increased prevalence of militarism among pastoralists may be related to their heightened vulnerability to danger. Depriving a farmer of his working capital is challenging in a culture that does not highly prioritise land. However, since pastoralists spend a substantial amount of time in solitude with the animals, they are susceptible to getting overwhelmed. According to Awogbade (1983:10), grazing herds refrained from going to the Jos Plateau due to the risk of violent assaults prior to the colonial era, despite its natural beauty. Despite its attractiveness, the Jos Plateau did not change the situation. Rural regions had a state of relative tranquillity and stability after 1910, which prompted the promotion of exploratory migrations to fresh pastures.

However, this southerly movement incurred costs for the pastoralists. These two primary features of their present civilization are evident: widespread urbanisation and a growing confrontation with the rural communities that they have historically depended on for their provision of essential cereal crops. Both characteristics indicate that their civilization has undergone more urbanisation. The pastoralists and farmers have always maintained an interdependent connection, relying on the local barter system where dairy products are exchanged for grain and periodically selling animals to generate income for other household purposes like clothing or marriage expenses. Traditionally, the reciprocal trade of dairy products in return for grain has sustained the mutual reliance between communities.

Furthermore, the availability of cereal crop remnants is crucial for the effectiveness of pastoral management strategies in some areas. Nevertheless, pastoralists must cultivate amicable ties with members of the agricultural community to ensure their ongoing presence in the same geographical region annually. This is because most of the products and services that pastoralists provide are specifically targeted towards the agriculture sector. Furthermore, the pastoralists exerted considerable effort to foster amicable connections with the people who offered them refuge, with the aim of prolonging their residency in those areas. However, if they are unable to establish

mutually beneficial connections with one other, it will be a challenge for them to sustain their presence for a prolonged duration. This suggests that the only way for them to ensure their ability to survive is by adopting adaptable migratory patterns, which consistently involve interacting with new fertile communities. To ensure the efficacy of these strategies, it is essential that the communities where pastoralists and farmers live be integrated. To understand the current transformation of the conflict, it is essential to be aware of the underlying structural elements that contribute to the conflict.

The danger of disease transmission is a contributing factor to the migration of pastoralists between different locations. These zebu cattle have consistently been susceptible to disease in regions with elevated relative humidity. Moritz (2003:3) stated that the colonial government carried out specific measures to control tsetse flies and provided access to several innovative veterinary treatments. The implementation of tsetse management initiatives facilitated the creation of additional grazing areas and even resulted in population growth in the Middle Belt. Furthermore, these efforts inadvertently eradicated how the illness was transmitted, namely, the vectors that hunted wild animals and the tsetse fly's woodland habitats, which were cleared for agricultural purposes. Pastoralists are driven by both their herd's nutritional needs and the fear of widespread and long-lasting diseases, particularly skin conditions like dermatophilosis.

Due to the exorbitant cost of meat in southern Nigeria, pastoralists find it economically viable to carry their livestock by truck to these settlements for grazing, enabling them to fatten them up. Indeed, several villages located in the states of Delta, Rivers, and Bayelsa have the potential to operate as host communities for pastoralists. The exorbitant cost of obese livestock, escalating transportation expenses, and the possibility of achieving economies of scale by herding animals near markets all had a role in the evolution of this approach. Furthermore, alongside pastoralists, merchants have recognised the potential advantages offered by the humid zone. Consequently, there are designated areas inside the forest zone that provide grassy patches for the purpose of fattening livestock. Cattle are sent to these sites to undergo weight increase prior to being sold.

From 1967 to 1976, the Plateau Province and the Benue Province were consolidated into a unified state. However, it has now become an independent state. A significant proportion of this state is situated in the Southern Guinea Savannah Zone and has a very sparse population density. The

presence of *Glossina morsitans*, a species of tsetse fly, in the area poses a significant risk to cow farming in wide territories, particularly during the wetter months of the year, due to the potential transmission of tsetse fly illness.

The Tiv ethnic group constitutes the largest portion of the population and has the highest level of importance. The Tiv people are gradually extending their land to the east towards Adamawa and from the south to the north via the Benue River. The establishment of whole lineages of clans maintains their dominant position over all other population groups, such as the Idoma and the Igede, among others. This is despite the lack of a territorial structure. This demographic group has less influence on the pastoralism economy since they get the 'muturu' from the Tiv for the bulk of the year. This region is generally recognised as a hub for the Fulani people, who engage in full-time nomadic cattle rearing and tend to stay in one location for extended durations. The decisive criteria that determine the development of sedentary enterprises using transhumant grazing practices are the conditions of land ownership and the level of pressure exerted by field farmers on the land. Within condensed territories, the establishment of a small emirate facilitates the implementation of land use entitlements, enabling Fulani farmers to cultivate a portion of the land. Gandaye refers to a management approach that is used across many types of enterprises. Furthermore, other than the gandu performed by a family, there is also cooperative work involved in field cultivation. Neighbours are invited to take part, and hence, they are considered as guests. An individual without any existing cattle will endeavour to acquire funds, such as via exchanging wild-purchased milk, with the goal of purchasing a single cow. Subsequently, they will progressively expand their livestock holdings (Fricke, 1993:209).

Sedentary landowners who engage in field agriculture and own substantial herds are expected to have a combined total of 150 livestock. However, it is uncommon for them to gather in a unified group as a single herd since it becomes difficult to supervise them while they are grazing if the herd consists of more than 50 individuals. During such circumstances, fifty heads of cattle are maintained near the property, while the remaining livestock is used for transhumant grazing during the dry season; prominent enterprises disperse their livestock and migrate to the vicinity of Loko on the Benue Plain, which is around 80 miles (130 km) away. However, the bulk of the stock during the dry season originates from the Kachia/Zaria Province. Additionally, there are nomadic herds from Bauchi Province, Kano, and even northern Adamawa present in that area (Fricke,

1993:209). Fricke states the following, based on data acquired from the livestock custodian in Nasarawa: Due to veterinary interventions, the population of sedentary, semi-sedentary, and nomadic herds in the Nasarawa Division has consistently increased from 1968 to the present. The plants in this region did not exhibit any signs of distress due to the drought (Fricke, 1993:210).

Fricke states that the Fulani own almost ninety per cent of the cattle in Keffi and Nasarawa. Townspeople sometimes own modest cow herds, which they then leave to sedentary cattle breeders who engage in either full-time or part-time cattle rearing. For every ten cattle in a herd, the owner is required to make an annual payment of one cow in addition to the expenses for supplying salt licks for the whole herd. With the advent of mechanised tractors, the local population has shown little inclination to engage in mixed farming. The local authority is seen to have a stronger presence of non-Fulani individuals, leading to a perception that Fulani's influence on the local authority's administration is relatively limited.

In Benue Province, the yearly tariff on cattle is often imposed on a very limited number of animals. Fricke also said that Awe, which is situated between the Lowland Division and Benue, has one-third of the cattle that is eligible for taxes. An extra one-third is allocated to Obi, which is situated to the east of Lafia. One-sixth of Assaiko is located near the Jos Plateau in the northern region. Keana, located south of Obi, receives one-sixth of the total amount. The tax list for the town of Lafia includes almost one thousand heads of cattle. Certain animals in this area are owned by the Borno people, who are the ones credited with establishing the town and have not abandoned their fondness for cattle. An additional portion of the cattle is kept in herds of a novel kind on farms that are fenced and owned by members of the emerging upper class. The farms are enclosed by fences.

The Wodabe people, originating from Bauchi Province, are often seen in the southern regions extending to the northern bank of the Benue River, particularly during the dry season. The Tiv farmers have a strained relationship with them due to their belief that the grazing cattle's activities result in soil compaction and damage to the grazing ground. The expansion of the Fulani to the south of the Benue River did not commence until the 1950s due to the repeated displacement of the herders by the Tiv people in the preceding years. The main hub is in the Katsina-Ala area, with an auxiliary hub situated in Wukari, inside the state of Taraba. The people who relocated from Pankshin, which is also referred to as the Jos Plateau, are classified as sedentary due to their

engagement in rice and yam cultivation with the aid of hired workers. In the rainy season, the total number of cattle, including those owned by merchants and non-sedentary herds, is estimated to be 40,000. However, during the dry season, this number increases to 80,000 (Fricke, 1993:210).

The most recent instance of the use of force against Fulani ranchers and their livestock in Otukpo, situated in the Idoma Division of the state, occurred in the late 1970s. Dairy products do not seem to arouse anyone's interest due to their cultural practices. The Fulani people were granted permission to stay in their domain only in the Adoka District, where the district head, known for his open-mindedness, leads. In the areas inhabited by the Tiv people, there are just a few farmers of mixed racial backgrounds to be found. As per the provided explanation, this phenomenon is attributed to the dense clusters of field trees, namely the *Parkia Butyrospermum Parkii* tree. It is crucial to note that the arrangement of laborious fieldwork based on age groups, the allocation of tasks related to cultivating and harvesting crops among different family members, and the high level of cultivation, like that of a garden, have effectively discouraged the adoption of an ox-drawn plough up until now.

2.13 Evolution of The Farmers-Herders Conflict in Nigeria

Ever since the inception of land cultivation, pastoralists and farmers have engaged in a contentious struggle over land and resources. The disputes have emerged due to the scarcity of resources, specifically land. The evolving nature of the war's peril in recent years has resulted in a rise in the total number of casualties and the number of individuals compelled to evacuate their residences throughout the nations impacted. Permitting the war to escalate further could result in severe consequences for food supply and animal-derived products, as there would be substantial depletion of valuable assets, crops, and animals (Ikezue and Ezeah 2017:152).

Despite the divergent perspectives of herders and farmers regarding the scarcity of land resources, violent confrontations between these two factions were comparatively less frequent in the past. According to the most recent statistical data, the herdsmen-farmers conflict was of magnitude in designated regions of the middle belt, specifically Nassarawa, Plateau and Benue states, between 1997 and 2011. Nevertheless, sporadic incidents transpired in a few additional states. Prolonged land ownership disputes have existed in Plateau State between the Fulani and Berom communities

residing in Jos, both of which assert their Fulani lineage. A massacre occurred on March 7, 2010, in which more than 500 people were gruesomely murdered and several others were injured in three villages located in the BarakinLadi and Jos South Local Government Areas of Plateau State. These areas are situated within the north-central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It is postulated that Fulani herders are the culprits behind these violent fatalities (Higazi, 2016:372).

According to the Global Terrorism Index of 2015, as of the end of 2014, the fatal toll from Fulani herdsmen homicides amounted to 1,229 (GTI, 2015:22). The murder rate continues to escalate, as evidenced by the documentation of more than 350 fatalities in February and March 2016 (Mikailu, 2016), 15 injuries in May 2016 (Stein, 2016), and 80 injuries in July 2016. In recent years, hostility has increased between farmers and herdsmen (Akinwotu, 2016:52). Herders have launched assaults against several Benue State settlements, including Agatu, Katsina-Ala, Loggo, Gunna, and Makurdi. The fatalities of two hundred individuals in the Shengev hamlet were attributed to the herdsmen of the Fulani ethnic group (Omoleye and Segun, 2018:21). Furthermore, attacks on nine villages were carried out by Fulani herders on April 25, 2016, within the Uzo-Uwani local government area of Enugu state, which is in the southeastern part of Nigeria. The assault resulted in the demise of over eleven people and inflicted substantial destruction on assets valued in the millions of Nigerian Naira (Vanguard, 2016). The Agatu ethnic community is concentrated in Benue State, which is in the country's north-central region.

Furthermore, the acts of aggression, property devastation, and killings that occurred in 2017 at the hands of the herdsmen resulted in the deaths of more than one hundred individuals (Rasaq, Udende and Abubakar, 2017:13). At least, not less than ten persons were killed in an attack on rural farmers on the 5th of March 2018 in Omosu Village in Ojigo ward Edumoga of Okpokwu local government of Benue State; when armed herdsmen opened fire on civilians (Godwin, 2018:37). Multiple communities in the Ketu Local Council Development Area of Ogun State were assaulted on February 5 by armed individuals who were allegedly herdsmen. The intensity of the violence compelled the closure of about 30 primary schools, in addition to inflicting considerable destruction on farmlands (Oladele, 2018:27). Twenty people were murdered in Adamawa State on February 28, 2018, because of fighting between armed Fulani herders in the Gwamba village of the Demsa Local Government Area. The violence perpetrated by Fulani herdsmen occurred in the state of Adamawa in 2018, as documented by This Day Newspaper. The Fulani herdsmen are

frequently perceived as a more significant menace in comparison to the Boko Haram terrorist organisation, which has been wreaking havoc in Nigeria's northern region for an extended duration (GTI, 2015; Sulaiman and Ja'afar-Furo, 2010:153). The farmer-herder conflict has resulted in substantial loss of lives and property, as evidenced by the 2015 GTI report and the 2010 study by Sulaiman and Ja'afar-Furo.

The account that was previously referenced regarding the atrocities and assaults on agricultural communities by Fulani herders did not sufficiently capture the substance of the ongoing farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria. Instances of fatalities involving Fulani people and their livestock are not frequently documented in the Nigerian media (Abubakar and Dano, 2018). To illustrate, consider the divergent media coverage surrounding the December 2017 slaughter in Taraba, which claimed the lives of more than 800 Fulani herders and destroyed their dwellings; in contrast, the deaths of 73 individuals from Benue state who were not of Fulani ethnicity, elicited hardly any media condemnation. In Benue State, 73 individuals lost their lives because of injuries. This is an examination of the biased media depiction of the Nigerian farmer-herders' conflicts, with an emphasis on criminal distortion. Prejudicial reportage prevails regarding the conflict in Nigeria involving pastoralists and farmers (Abubakar and Dano, 2018: 238).

Additionally, on January 31, 2018, there was breaking news across the media with a headline that read, "Bandits kill, burn seven travellers to ashes." This news was about a mass killing that occurred in the state of Benue. It is going to require a lot of work to read the entire article to find out that the people who were killed were Fulani, and the native Tiv militia that was responsible for the killings was portrayed as bandits (Higazi, 2016:370). On the other hand, Balogun stated that the headline would have been different if the perpetrators were Fulani killers.

Furthermore, to accurately record acts of aggression committed against Fulani pastoralists and the animals entrusted to their care, it has historically been customary to obscure the perpetrators' identities and designate them as bandits. While the partial reporting on Fulani herdsmen does not exonerate them from responsibility for the escalation of conflicts, the majority of Nigerian media outlets' consistent labelling of violent herdsmen as "Fulani" suggests that the Fulani people are exclusively culpable for criminal activities. The presumably biased media coverage that accompanied the Fulani herders in 2018 does not exonerate them from accountability for the

escalation of the incident. As stated in *Premium Times* (2018), the media's recurrent employment of the term "Fulani" to denote savage herders is not merely a cliché. Furthermore, it appears that the exacerbation of the conflict between Fulani herders and farmers could be facilitated by biased reporting (Mogekwu, 2011:252; Adisa and Adekunle, 2010:17). As stated by Abdulbaqi and Ariemu (2017:101) and Howard and Howard (2003:76), certain scholars contend that the media significantly influences the formation of public opinion. They argue that when the media assign responsibility by identifying an individual as the culprit without conducting an adequate investigation, the public begins to form a mental image of an adversary.

This segment of the chapter analyses the potential correlation between livestock ownership and herders' employed status, which may contribute to the escalation of conflicts between Fulani herders and farmers. Irrespective of the circumstances, certain analysts posit that the increasing utilisation of herders could potentially be the catalyst for the escalation in violence. Consequently, the subsequent segment of this chapter analyses the dynamics of the partnerships between the proprietors of the livestock and the employed herders.

Heathcote (1983:278) posits in his concluding remarks that certain scholars, including Ibn Khaldun and Toynbee (1958), hold the view that the historical conflict between "the desert and the sown" originated from the economic discrepancy between these two modes of existence. Both historians regarded the conflict primarily as a widespread phenomenon that occurred throughout Southeast Asia and North Africa. According to Heathcote, the conflict is attributed by both scholars to the significant disparities in lifestyle and economic status that exist between the arid hinterlands and the oases and river regions. Alternating cycles of scarcity and abundance, brought about by droughts or epidemics of pests and diseases that affected both plants and insects, distinguished these variations. According to Heathcote (1983:276), both academics are of the opinion that the conflicts emerged because of the significant discrepancies in lifestyle and income. Furthermore, Nura (1996) argues that the historical conflict between herders and farmers extended beyond the regions identified by Toynbee (1958) and Ibn Khaldun, encompassing Latin America as well. According to Ibn Khaldun and Toynbee (1958), these regions were the predominant sites where acts of violence were most pervasive. His argument is founded upon the historical fact that Spanish pastoralists forcibly removed indigenous agriculturalists from the fruitful valleys between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, laying the groundwork for the conflicts of the twentieth

century. Instances of this conflict emerged in the modern era, including the agrarian uprisings in Mexico in 1917 and the Peruvian and Bolivian conflicts of 1950 and 1953, respectively. It was recognised that these occurrences reflected the continuous nature of this conflict (Abba and Usman, 2008:170).

The dispute that arises between pastoralists and farmers is not essentially confined to a specific geographical region, nor can it be ascribed to a singular period in history. It is crucial to note that conflict has always been inherent in specific regions and communities, where environmental, economic, and social conditions have converged to produce a propensity for competition between the two groups. This phenomenon is notably conspicuous in the context of Benue State, Nigeria.

It is widely recognised that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were two discrete epochs in history distinguished by pronounced military confrontations, intense competition, and conflict among numerous nations and factions, most notably the pastoralists and farmers in West Africa. Notwithstanding the political supremacy of pastoral communities originating from the northern Sahel and the involuntary enslavement imposed by these tribes on agricultural occupants, robust economic relations persisted between the two groups during this period. According to Webb (1995:15) and Hussein (1998:20), arid pastoralists depend on Savannah farmers for sustenance and essential resources such as tent poles, clothing, and culinary apparatus in exchange for cereals instead of salt. Hussein's findings are consistent with those of Webb. The extensive network of transactions that pastoralists engaged in for grain demonstrated the commercial relationship between farmers and pastoralists (Oddih, 2000). Little (1994:62) conducted research in Niger, where it was observed that farmers enticed animals into their cultivated fields by offering money, sugar, and tea incentives to the herders during the previous harvest season. This action was taken to enable the animals to traverse the cultivated fields more easily. On their fields, farmers have been observed digging wells to entice post-harvest grazing. Furthermore, instances have been reported of them entrusting a particular herder with the care of a limited number of animals in exchange for the herds' access to the proprietors' property.

Horowitz (1985) and Horowitz and Little (1987), citing prior research, agree that there were times when pastoralist/farmer interactions were fraught with increased tension. The relationships between pastoralists and settlers were significantly strained and stressed because of the pastoralists'

early migration into settled areas before the completion of harvests. It was frequently observed that pastoralists and cultivators in Niger utilised the land differently. The stance of the state was predominantly conciliatory as opposed to being antagonistic. An examination of Fulani pastoralism in Jos (Awogbade, 1983:22) reveals that farmers in the region persisted in tolerating Fulani pastoralists, notwithstanding the intensifying competition for resources. The partnership, nevertheless, continued to be under increasing duress. However, agricultural produce is traded for livestock, manure, and milk, and ceremonial transactions between the pastoralists and the settled communities involve explicit social exchanges. As a result, pastoralists act as agents for the village farmers, who consider livestock, specifically cattle, to be a viable financial investment. Bennet (1991) provides additional evidence of the presence of reciprocal exchanges and interactions between pastoral communities (e.g., the Tuareg and Fulbe) and agricultural societies (e.g., the Kanuri, Hausa, and Songhay) in Niger, a country characterised by a substantial nomad population involved in agricultural pursuits and the ownership of livestock by all farmers.

According to Gueye (1994), the 'Goll,' a local proverb in the Senegalese hamlet of Fandene, asserts that "the pastoralist and the field are intrinsically intertwined." A study carried out in an identical location referenced this proverb. This further strengthens the enduring partnership between animal husbandry and agriculture, which is also known as the relationship between pastoralists and farmers, and the mutually advantageous connection between the two. The degree of interaction between pastoralists and cultivators in the semi-arid regions of Africa has inspired several scholars to establish parallels with familial bonds, including those between spouses. This is because both categories of organisms inhabit the semi-arid regions of Africa.

On the contrary, Raynaut and Delville (1997:112) contend that the necessity to reconcile divergent interests has invariably engendered conflict in the face of such coexistence. As per their viewpoint, conflicts could potentially emerge because of insufficient livestock management practices and the unimpeded mobility of animals within agricultural regions. This occurrence is consistent during critical phases of the annual cycle, specifically planting season, harvest time, and periods when livestock are prevented from fleeing agricultural areas. As a result of agricultural activities impeding animal mobility and limiting their access to water and grazing areas, premature return results in conflicts.

It has been asserted that the frequency of these conflicts in West Africa, specifically in Nigeria, is increasing (Muhammed et al., 2024:15). Nevertheless, empirical evidence is generally scarce to support assertions of an increase in violence between pastoralists and farmers (Hussein, 1998; Hussein et al., 1999). The enduring nature of this conflict and the considerable attention it has garnered from academics, politicians, stakeholders, and researchers are beyond dispute. The prevalence of conflicts between pastoralists and farmers, nevertheless, has been attributed to a multitude of plausible explanations. As identified by Breusers et al.; 1998: 23), several factors contribute to this phenomenon: the expansion of cultivated areas, the augmentation of livestock, and the increased demand for natural resources resulting from population development. However, the notion that perennial population growth, environmental degradation, and irrational natural resource consumption in northern Nigeria inexorably led to conflicts between pastoralists and farmers is profoundly challenged in a study conducted by Miligan and Binns (2007). According to Abba and Usman (2008:171), crisis narratives overlook the magnitude of diversity and imbalances in the natural environment while placing excessive emphasis on the impact of history, power, and symbols on rural existence. These anecdotes underscore the importance of history, symbolism, and authority in the functioning of rural existence.

2.14 Nature, Forms and Dynamism of The Herders-Farmers Conflict

Overall, conflicts can present themselves in diverse and non-combatant forms. Mild and non-violent manifestations include interpersonal avoidance, verbal exchanges of ridicule, character assassination, and ridicule. Conversely, it can be violent and come in destructive manifestations, including riots, assaults, crises, and war.

Notwithstanding the limited availability of information regarding the conflict's characteristics, academics and writers have contributed significant perspectives regarding the magnitude of the persistent dispute between pastoralists and farmers in Benue State, Nigeria. According to Yahaya (2008:8), confrontations between pastoralists and farmers are frequently marked by devastation and violence and transpire within a restricted period. Based on his testimony, these disputes frequently transpire in the wee hours of the night, just prior to the commencement of the harvest season, when the pastoralists are approaching the farmlands while the farmers are soundly resting in their dwellings.

According to Khan (2007:6), ethnicity substantially impacts conflicts that arise between pastoralists and cultivators. Constantly arising are these conflicts between the pastoralist Fulbe (Fulani) and the agrarian Tiv and Idoma (as observed in Benue State). Khan presents this as evidence that ethnicity exerts a more substantial impact. Khan additionally notes that the prevailing tensions have the potential to escalate into religious and ethnic conflicts, notwithstanding the lack of authentic ethno-religious strife in Benue State. The phenomenon mentioned above can be ascribed to the demographic makeup of the central region, encompassing Benue state, where a significant proportion of the populace is dedicated to Christian faith and agricultural pursuits. On the contrary, the minority population is predominantly comprised of pastoralists who adhere to the Islamic faith. Consequently, it is indisputable that the conflict would invariably escalate into one that is religious or ethnic in nature.

In their analysis of the fundamental tenets of National Fadama Development, Ingawa, Ega, and Erhabor (1999:6) observed that these discussions have occurred repeatedly over the course of several decades. Based on their observations, the conflict predominantly transpires during the arid season, coinciding with the animals' southward migration, and occasionally resurfaces at the onset of the rainy season, coinciding with their return voyage. Moreover, disagreements may arise once the animals have been returned. However, it is critical to note that the activities of pastoralists, who frequently travel in large groups and are armed, have, on purpose, introduced a new dimension to the conflicts in recent years. They claim to have personally observed this phenomenon as well. This implies that the present conflict is being waged utilising sophisticated weaponry and potent ammunition, as opposed to the bows and arrows that the pastoral herdsmen historically employed as their primary defensive mechanism. The potential cause of this could be ascribed to Nigeria's porous borders, which enable the unauthorised passage of firearms and other compact armaments into the nation. This assertion is supported by the 1997 Bauchi State Agricultural Development Plan report, which argues that the advent of militant pastoralist factions such as the "Bokoloji" and the "Udawa" has brought a lethal and violent dimension to the conflicts. According to the report, these young pastoralists possess a substantial collection of rifles and arrows. They appear to be protected and supported by influential members of their community as well as criminals; as a result, they disregard all legal and authoritative constraints.

The global reach of the pastoralist-farmer conflict is particularly pronounced in cases where ethnic communities transcend national boundaries, as with the Sudanese Toposa and Kenyan Turkana, Mali, and other African regions. Due to the migration of this specific ethnic group, both countries are embroiled in armed conflict. From southern Sudan, Toposa cattle breeders frequently infiltrate Kenyan territory with the intent of robbing farms and communities. On the other hand, a significant number of individuals were slaughtered in 1984 in Karamojony, Uganda, by Kenyan pastoralists who attacked indigenous cultivators (Herrero, 2003:8). Because the conflict is transpiring in a region devoid of any nation's territorial jurisdiction, it is reasonable to categorise it as an international conflict.

2.15 Traditional Conflict Management and Peacebuilding among Herders and Farmers

Conflict resolution is unquestionably a pervasive issue in the African context, given that it entails developing comprehensive resolutions to hostile situations. Therefore, conflict resolution is a multifaceted procedure that reconciles disputes that arise within and between communities and warring factions; this process varies across societies and civilizations. It is possible to define "traditional" as "the legacy of the past," a term that incorporates every change and adaptation that the past undoubtedly underwent. The phrase "traditional technique of conflict resolution" pertains to the indigenous practices and customs that were historically employed to resolve complex issues and reconcile disagreements.

Due to the current situation, those of us who reside in Africa may be compelled to disregard the continent's intricate history and enduring indigenous knowledge. Nonetheless, our attention is riveted by the most recent and current news articles concerning ceasefires and agreements and global conflicts and battles. We are impressed by the empirical foundations of contemporary conflict resolution techniques from the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Australia, in addition to their professional calibre. Conversely, it is imperative that we exercise caution lest the appeal of contemporary materials divert our attention from the time-tested methodologies that originated in Africa.

Africa's profound and captivating historical background positions it favourably to pioneer revolutionary advancements in the domain of conflict resolution. Certain customs remain

authentic, potentially dating back to ancient times when they originated in ancient Mesopotamia and China. It is possible that the emergence of the earliest traditions in Egypt occurred during the same time. This claim is supported by Oguntomisin's (2004:10) assertion that the peacekeeping processes emanate from the household and the individual. As a result, an individual who is free from internal and familial conflict can develop positive relationships with both neighbours and the larger community, as well as displaying less aggression. Internal and domestic strife are significant factors that contribute to hostility in partnerships. As a result, various communities in pre-colonial Nigeria instituted distinct codes of conduct to regulate personal behaviour and reduce the frequency of disputes between and among members of the same community and within households. Conventions governed issues such as cohabitation, marital partnerships, parental inheritance, and other pertinent topics and were maintained by means of widely acknowledged taboos. In his capacity as the family patriarch, the spouse was entrusted with the duty of maintaining domestic harmony and cultivating harmonious connections among members of his household and the inhabitants of their respective local communities. In their respective spheres of authority, the duties of the compound and ward leaders, village and district heads, clan and chief heads, and chiefs were largely analogous. The individuals in question enforced their regulations and customs with corresponding sanctions against those who disobeyed them. These regulations were scrupulously observed.

Moreover, in African societies, where the family has traditionally been regarded as the most fundamental aspect of political culture, it functions as the primary bedrock for addressing challenges through traditional governance. The oldest male member of each family is traditionally the chief of the household in every culture. This notion is supported by Olaoba's (2002:20) classification of Yoruba indigenous courts into two primary categories: informal courts and formal courts.

Informal judicial systems are distinguished by hastily convened public proceedings and the resolution of disputes amidst unstructured platforms, including market areas, under trees, and other communal gathering places. Davidson (1973:114–115) and Koypoff (1971:129–142) provide support for the claim through their observations that the elders, symbolic of the ancestral spirit, gather beneath the tree to discuss and resolve matters amicably until a consensus is reached. Koypoff (1971:129–142) and Davidson (1973:114–115) provide support for the claim.

Furthermore, while enjoying the pleasant evening breeze while seated beneath the trees, the elders devoted time to attentively considering and resolving matters that appeared to be causing strife within the community. When children fought in the past, bystanders would often intervene spontaneously to resolve the situation. Generally, these individuals succeeded in achieving a resolution to the termagants' efforts to promote peace and harmony.

The significance of Africa's legal heritage and the judicial systems that administer justice is emphasised by Olaoba (2002:33). The pursuance of reconciliation and the establishment of peace are fundamental tenets within the framework of African law. Peacebuilding and peacemaking were the primary concerns of Africans, in contrast to peacekeeping, which is considered a third-world approach to mediating peace within the region. This change in emphasis can potentially be ascribed to the extensive history of conflict that has plagued the continent. In African societies, informal legal systems include dispute-resolution mechanisms such as open tribunals, the courts of monarchs, and religious cults. In the context of African society, each of these approaches contributed to the preservation of law and order. Recognised and sanctioned by members of society, these extrajudicial proceedings are carried out through the operations and influences of secret society sanctions. The procedures are carried out through the activities of covert organisations. These organisations have a wide range of effects on the administration of justice in African nations, encompassing both advantageous and detrimental facets. However, the approach taken to execute the extrajudicial process varies across cultures and civilizations.

A significant proportion of Africans maintain the conviction that God is the paramount being and duly recognise him as such. They also consider his judgement to be definitive. The apex being is delineated with an assortment of attributes (God). An individual who possesses the attribute of "one who comprehends the inner workings"—Oche no jipu ache—is a member of the Idoma community residing in the state of Benue. Another is Ohepo Okwei, the virtuous and righteous judge. This alludes to the fact that Africans are regarded as very religious people who believe in the practice of traditional mode that approves of a supreme being who is the great judge that decides the fate of humans objectively. African nations are also host to numerous covert societies and sects that have significant implications for the legal system. The opinions regarding these cults are nearly unanimous. Nwolise (2004) asserts that the "Ogugu" shrine in eastern Nigeria bases its judgmental process on the truth. The "Ogboni" secret society holds significant reverence among the Yoruba

and the Bini from the state of Edo. Opoku (1978:187) delineates the Mende community in Sierra Leone into two discrete social factions, namely the "Poro" and the "Sanda."

Furthermore, in south-eastern Nigeria, one can find the "Ekpo" (leopard) and "Ekpe" spirit organisations. Additionally, the Igbo have an organisation known as Ndi-diadia, which is composed of distinguished spiritual men. Within African civilizations, the executive chiefs are the Ogboni chiefs. They possess the jurisdiction to demand the abdication of a throne or the suicide of a supreme monarch convicted of a grievous crime, as is the case in the study region with the Oba in Yoruba country or the Chi-Idoma or Tor Tiv, respectively. The chiefs are entrusted with society's legislative, executive, and judicial responsibilities. Olaoba (2002:45) posited that traditional judicial authority was intricately linked to extrajudicial processes and traditional executive power within indigenous communities. He arrived at this conclusion based on the information that has been provided here.

Furthermore, individuals hailing from Africa are regarded as exceedingly devout and steadfast in their adherence to conventional modes of worship, both prior to and after the advent of Christianity. This perception continues to endure at present. In Africa, there exists a prevalent belief that traditional religious systems have the potential to aid adherents in effecting constructive transformations to their lifestyle. Furthermore, it executes judicial functions. In Benue and other African communities, religious leaders solicit guidance from their respective deities on behalf of their adherents. Conflicts involving land, pastoralists and farmers, criminal affairs, or any other type of dispute are brought before the leaders of these religious communities for the purpose of investigation and resolution. Oracles are referenced for the purpose of discovering remedies for fatal diseases and aiding in the attribution of culpability for catastrophic events that strike society. Devotees serve as the conduits by which the deity addresses obstinate perpetrators, whether they are recognised or unknown. The unwavering belief of the African populace in the existence of these deities enhances social stability on a broader scale. This mechanism elicits psychosomatic anxiety among the general population, thereby potentially mitigating social discord and illicit behaviour within the community. The administration of justice in the state of Benue is significantly impacted by deities such as Owoicho Okpabanna (the god of thunder), Owoicho Oje (the god of iron), Owoicho Okpa (the god of streams and rivers), Owoicho Olohi (the god of morality), and Owoicho Hepo (the god of justice) (Agbegbedia, 2013:96).

Criminal and matrimonial disputes are entrusted to the celestial realm for resolution. Adversaries who transgress and provoke the fury and discontent of these deities shall endure dreadful repercussions. Additionally, any witnesses shall be obligated to ingest specific objects as a means of securing their own absolution. If a criminal or offender were to meet their demise at the hands of any of these deities due to the administered oath, the bereaved individual would be obligated to perform specific rituals to appease the deities and impede the transmission of the sacrifice to subsequent family members. Prior to the chief cleric of the shrine conducting the sacrifice, specific objects intended for the sacrifice must be presented to him. This situation bears resemblance to that of the Ogugu shrine, situated in the eastern region of Nigeria. The sacrifice is conducted at the designated hour under the supervision of either the principal priest or the deities of the shrine (Nwolise, 2004:43). The assertions made by Fadipe (1970) regarding the Yoruba are essentially universal throughout Africa, including among the population under study in the Nigerian state of Benue. As per his assertion, an approach employed by ancient Yoruba cultures to facilitate the dispensation of judgement was extrajudicial procedure. His perspective was that instances involving witchcraft were customarily wherein the poison ordeal was administered. A guilty person may be afforded the chance to redeem their name in most civilizations on the condition that they consent to undergo the "sasswood" toxic experience. The defendant shall be exonerated if they do not sustain any physical harm. However, should the defendant die, the entire family of the defendant, including his children, shall be required to take the examination to rectify the error.

Based on the preceding discourse, it is feasible to deduce that virtually every community possesses its own distinct methodologies for addressing conflicts and disagreements pertaining to violations, including those concerning natural resources. The administration of resources and conflicts are, at their most fundamental level, two facets of the same process. Both endeavours to establish accountability, coherence, and order in circumstances characterised by competition and competing interests. It is the responsibility of the local governments tasked with resource management to address and resolve any issues that may arise. East African pastoralists utilising "nested" resource management and conflict management groups is illustrated by Haro, Doyo and McPeak (2004:294). Families, compounds, aggregates of camps, and entities referred to as "neighbourhoods" comprise these institutions. The designation, "informal" does not imply haphazardness on the part of local resource management authorities; rather, it denotes the lack of

state authorities' recognition of the processes and decisions implemented by the local government. Disputes are predominantly resolved through negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and adjudication within communities. Human beings frequently employ avoidance and coercion as well. Social pressure, rumours, exclusion, public disgrace, witchcraft, and the division of families or communities are all manifestations of coercion. Individuals also frequently employ public humiliation and superstition.

The initial differentiating characteristic of traditional systems, according to Zartman (1989:121), is that the resolution of disputes is predicated on personal experience and is not formally documented, like other facets of traditional legacy. According to Bozeman (1976:288), the inception of conflict management in Africa can be traced back to ancient societal practices. As a result, these traditional approaches to conflict resolution in Africa function as all-encompassing structures that bear a striking resemblance to other facets of societal existence. Folklore, melodies, rituals, and various artistic expressions, including sculpture, contribute to the representation of the system. Additionally, more refined manifestations of the system can be observed in judicial organisations. This system is frequently maintained and communicated using a variety of methods.

Zartman (1989:127) argues that the incorporation and diffusion of conflict management strategies within religious, social, cultural, and political spheres is an additional attribute of traditional systems that can be explained by preliterate heritage. This constitutes an extra component of conventional systems. A considerable number of strategies for conflict resolution are firmly grounded in a variety of cultural practices, religious observances and rituals, witchcraft, religious practices, and activities affiliated with secret societies, to name a few. The authority of mediators is frequently derived from their advanced age, religious responsibilities and functions, and various other notable personal qualities. The documentation regarding the roles that secret societies fulfil in conflict mediation is also extensive. These organisations manifest their mythological and ceremonial authority using masquerades and masks.

It is not difficult to comprehend why individuals would verbally contemplate this area of intellectual inquiry at this moment, considering the combined influence of continental and national experiences. Prior to the colonial powers' arrival, Africans, and Nigeria in particular, had cultivated unique methodologies for surveillance, prevention, regulation, and conflict resolution. It is

important to note this aspect (Nwolise, 2004). Their unique practices and traditions contributed to the establishment of trust, the promotion of peace, and the development of harmony. Certain civilizations have experienced the corruption or complete eradication of these exceptional and effective methods due to the influences of colonialism, which encompass religious psycho-war factions. These systems are virtually extinct at present. Therefore, there is widespread violence, which impedes progress and contributes to an unstable environment.

2.16 Chapter Conclusion

This specific chapter is divided into two independent sections that function independently. One aspect pertains to the conceptualization of conflicts between herdsman and farmers, whereas the other is focused on the assessment of pertinent literature and scholastic contributions that are especially pertinent to this field of study. The literature review comprises scholarly publications that cover a wide range of subjects. These include the historical backdrop of Fulani expansion in Nigeria, agricultural practices and land utilisation in both Nigeria and Benue, the relationship between pastoralism and herding activities in Nigeria, the origins of Fulani herders in Benue, the progression of conflicts between farmers and herders in Nigeria, and the characteristics, structures, and dynamics of the conflict between Fulani herders and farmers in Nigeria. Acknowledging the fact that collecting empirical data on the nature of the relationships between herdsman and farmers in Nigeria constitutes one of the country's most significant challenges, this is primarily because prior investigations in this domain predominantly relied on secondary sources to obtain their conclusions.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

Several research and studies on the relationship between farmers and herders in Africa have concentrated majorly on the causes of the intergroup conflicts between the two rival groups, as well as the impact of resource constraints and environmental/climate change on these disputes. Nevertheless, the focus of this research has been on how the structural and historical aspects of farmer-herder relationships can be annexed for peacebuilding among farmers and Pastoralists in Rural Grazing Areas in Benue State.

Although there is a lack of theories specifically addressing intergroup relations among herders, there are some theories that examine the cooperation between farmers and herders. These theories also explore the social networks and ties that develop over time, how these cooperative efforts impact conflicts and opportunities for peacebuilding between the two groups, and their overall cooperation. This chapter primarily examines the theoretical concepts that are relevant to the issues and objectives of the research. Furthermore, its aim is to enhance our theoretical comprehension of the connections among conflict, environmental change, cooperation, and social networks in the context of farmer-herder interactions in Benue State and Nigeria while also identifying existing gaps in the literature.

The term "theoretical framework" denotes the conceptual structure that provides direction for the construction and analysis of a research study or endeavour. The analysis conducted in a study is predicated on the notion that it furnishes a logical rationale for deliberating on the subject and its associated concerns, in addition to firm foundations for debating and scrutinising the subject under investigation. It is frequently necessary for scholars and intellectuals to make extensive use of or exploit it in their research.

Anthologies of peacebuilding and sociology have been employed to elucidate the intricate social dynamics and disputes that arise between herdsman and farmers in Nigeria. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied, seven theoretical frameworks are applied: the theory of eco-violence, the theory of social identity, the theory of realistic group conflict, the social network theory, the rational choice theory, and the John Paul Lederach Peace-

building theory. This occurrence is centred on intergroup strife between Nigerian cultivators and Fulani herders.

3.2 Theory of Eco-Violence

Homer Dixon is widely acknowledged as the progenitor of the theory of eco-violence. The present study has embraced the thesis due to its satisfactory explanatory capacity to elucidate the complex intricacies at play. To attain a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between climate change and the conflicts between Fulani herders and farmers, as well as its implications for intergroup relations and the potential for peacebuilding in Nigeria, it is imperative to employ a theory that encompasses all facets of this intricate discourse.

Homer-Dixon and Blitt (1998:89) constructed their arguments around the notion that significant populations in several developing countries are profoundly dependent on four environmental resources—cropland, forests, freshwater, and fish—which are vital for crop production. Disputes may arise when these resources become scarce or diminished due to wastage, excessive use, or deterioration in certain circumstances. Certain population groups are disproportionately affected by the scarcity of forest products, salmon, and farmland water due to population growth, population decline, and unequal access to renewable resources, individually or in combination.

The negative consequences for the economic sustainability of affected individuals, local social groups, and economies at the regional or national level are a direct consequence of this shortage. Consequently, this may necessitate that affected individuals relocate to alternative areas. Homer-Dixon and Gleditsch (2002:22) and Urdal and Gleditsch (1998:35) are two such sources. In most cases, the migration of specific groups results in ethnic conflicts in their new territories, just as a decline in prosperity can spark conflicts motivated by adversity. Additionally, migration and the outbreak of ethnic conflicts are correlated.

As posited by Homer-Dixon and Blitt (1998:76), the foundation of this theory lies in the notion that environmental hazards, an inadequate supply, an excessive demand, or an unequal resource distribution may cause resource scarcity. Due to these concerns, specific subgroups of the population are compelled to partake in behaviours that involve violence and deprivation. Population expansion, economic development, pollution, and climate change are the conventional

four factors that increase the probability that a society will eventually encounter a scarcity of these vital resources. Additionally, there are additional factors that contribute to this probability. Consequently, the limited accessibility of environmental resources will exert strain on agricultural and economic output, ultimately leading to the displacement of livelihoods, the perpetuation of poverty, and migration.

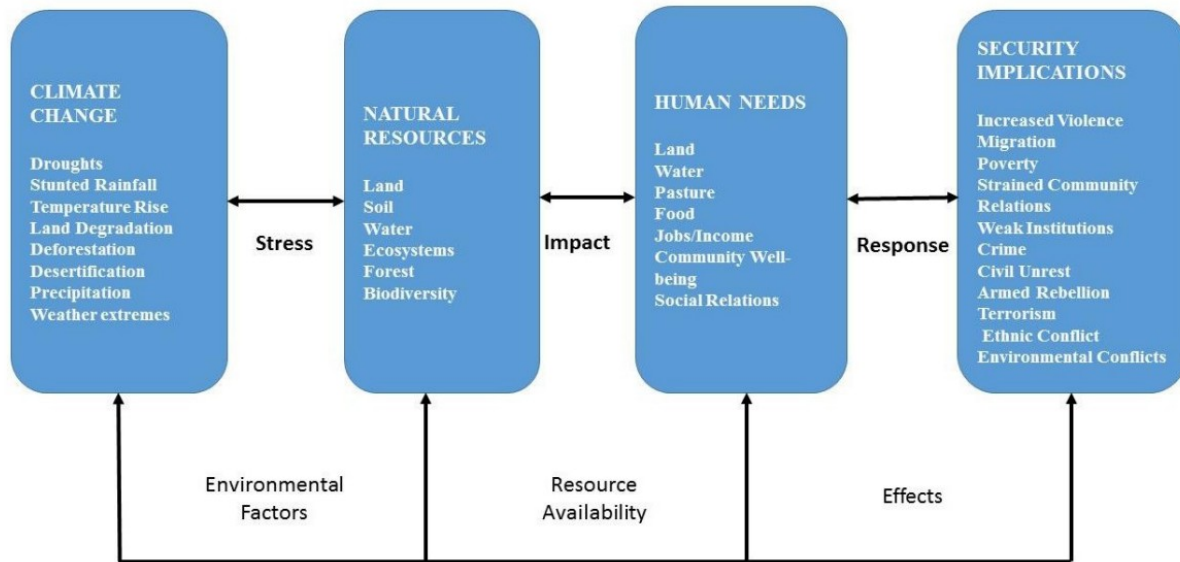
Furthermore, this could potentially be linked to the ongoing dialogue surrounding environmental scarcity and conflict. The notion of environmental scarcity is closely connected to environmental security. The former is frequently referenced in the context of environmental crises and stands in contrast to environmental insecurity. The phrase "latter" pertains to the susceptibility of individuals and collectives to significant negative consequences that result from environmental modification, irrespective of whether the influence is direct or indirect (Barnett, 2001:25). Environmental change generally encompasses alterations in climate and anthropogenic factors that contribute to the degradation of the environment, desertification, biodiversity loss, and changes in land use (Adger, Lorenzoni, & O'Brien, 2009:89; Stern, Young, & Druckman, 1992:131).

The environmental changes can be attributed to either natural phenomena or human activities. Regardless of the cause, both factors diminish the ability to reverse the change, leading to worldwide environmental insecurity (Barnett, 2007:14). As a result of environmental degradation, climate change, and the depletion of natural resources (such as grazing land, water, and forests), these alterations are evident. Long-term variations in temperature, precipitation, humidity, wind patterns, and severe weather events are all components of climate change, as defined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2007 and 2014b. Climate change is defined as a discernible alteration in the earth's climate (IPCC, 2007:112). This modification can be identified through statistical analysis of fluctuations in the climate's average and/or variations in its characteristics. This alteration persists for a significant duration, frequently exceeding decades.

There is often a correlation between the potential for resource scarcity and environmental change and the ability to instigate violent conflicts and insecurity. The argument at hand possesses an extensive historical lineage, which commences with the publication of "The Coming Anarchy" by Thomas Malthus and Robert Kaplan in 1994 and persists to the present day. Environmental

conflicts often emerge because of competition for scarce resources and environmental strain (Page, 2000:42). The relationship between environmental change and conflict is depicted in Figure below:

Figure 3.1: Linkages of Environmental Change, Natural Resource Scarcity and Security



Sources: Adapted from Scheffran (2011:736)

Scheffran (2011) demonstrates in Figure 3.1 how desertification, water scarcity, desertification, and droughts exacerbate the depletion of natural resources such as land, water, and pasture, thereby impeding the fulfilment of human necessities. As a result, in situations where individuals are unable to satisfy their aspirations, they resort to activities such as migration, conflict, criminality, and violence, among others, that have detrimental effects on human security. Likewise, as Homer-Dixon (1999:76) illustrates, heightened competition and conflicts arise among human beings because of the demand for natural resources. As defined by Homer-Dixon (1999:77), resource scarcity is the depletion and degradation of environmental resources, including salmon populations, agricultural land, water, and forests. The notion of scarcity, as explicated by Homer-Dixon (1994:32), arises from the convergence of resource inequity and population expansion. In his writings on resource acquisition and ecological exclusion, he effectively illustrates these concepts. According to Homer-Dixon (1999:78), the presence of environmental scarcity influences

human desires. Violence arises because of the convergence of this pressure with societal variables, including marginalisation, ethnicity, and socioeconomic inequality. The farmer-herder disputes in north-central Nigeria are frequently referenced as a paradigmatic example of how resource deficiency or environmental scarcity can precipitate violent strife. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2007:8), a robust correlation exists between the war in Darfur, desertification, and land degradation. Therefore, the environment acted as a catalyst for the initiation of conflicts, which were further prolonged by ethnic, political, and tribal considerations. The degradation of the environment has also been a consequence of warfare.

Numerous scholars investigating the relationship between resource scarcity, violent conflict and environmental scarcity/change concur that the association is rarely linear. Rather, it can be observed through phenomena like environmental migrations and other social variables. In conjunction with additional physical and social variables, ecological change and resource scarcity may contribute to the development of conflicts. Nonetheless, it is essential to recognise that environmental change and resource scarcity are not the sole causes of conflict occurrence. These must be activated by an assortment of conditions. Migration is frequently a direct consequence of environmental fluctuations among pastoralists.

Nevertheless, conflicts arise not solely due to competition or resource scarcity but also because of additional factors. A considerable portion of the research that establishes a connection between violent conflict and environmental scarcity has consistently been hampered by an absence of convincing evidence and has relied primarily on conjecture. One perspective posits that conflicts are precipitated by avarice as opposed to resource scarcity, which subsequently gives rise to grievances (Collier, 2001:136, 2006; Collier et al., 2003:45). Collier et al. (2003:156) contend that the scarcity of exploitable resources is not the primary catalyst for violent conflicts but rather their abundance. As a result, conflicts frequently arise between resource consumers, including farmers and Fulani pastoralists, due to the ample availability of resources (see Le Billon, 2001:570; Welsch, 2008:510). Affected regions are those that possess copious amounts of resources. The profusion of resources attracts migrants, who engage in competitive behaviour to obtain access to them. Greiner (2012:451) posits that the emergence of conflicts among pastoralist communities residing in the East Pokot District of Kenya, such as the Samburu and Pokot, is not attributable to a scarcity of resources but rather to their increasing abundance and significance. When comparing migrant

cultivators and migrant Fulani herders in the central Volta Basin of Ghana, Abubakari and Tonah (2009:210) discovered similar results. Similar findings were reported by Bassett (1988:462), who examined Sunafu farmers and migrating Fulani herdsmen in northern Côte d'Ivoire.

Considering the explanation, the eco-violence theory may offer a more comprehensive understanding of the precise mechanisms through which climate change exacerbates the animosity between Nigerian farmers and herdsmen. Unquestionable realities include the herdsmen's aspiration to relocate to areas with more fruitful soil to provide for their livestock and the fluctuating climate that induces droughts. This implies that as climate change intensifies, the detrimental effects of desertification caused by drought will be amplified. Moreover, confrontations between migrant herdsmen and farmers are extremely likely to ensue. It is theoretically possible to convert grasses into a form suitable for canning to provide them with animal fodder in the same location. A sustainable remedy to the issue would be this. This measure would effectively impede the mobility of herdsmen, a practice that frequently leads to conflicts with farmers due to resource competition.

3.3 Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory originated from the Gestalt school of thought, which demonstrated that individuals have the propensity to overestimate the value of objects or physical stimuli that are associated with a particular identity. The overestimation occurs because of the intrinsic procedure involved in categorising these entities or stimuli into substantial groups (Amancio, 2002:402; Valentim, 2003:176). The social identity theory was formulated in 1971 by Henri Tajfel. The tendency to exhibit prejudice against other groups and the manifestation of favouritism towards one's own group are both phenomena explicable by social identity theory. It provides individuals with a systematic framework for examining and distinguishing the similarities and differences between various groups. Social structures and attitudes have a significant impact on the formation of a cultural perspective regarding intergroup interactions. According to Henri Tajfel, individuals who identify with a particular social group may experience sentiments of pride and self-esteem. Through the reinforcement of common ideals and beliefs, people may experience a sense of personal fulfilment. An organisation can foster a sense of belonging among its members when those members have comparable interests, values, and activities (Tajfel & Turner, 1979:45). Social identification, which results from a desire for positive uniqueness and perceived group status, legitimacy, stability, and permeability, is the source of in-group partiality (Tajfel & Turner,

1979:44). Despite this, the in-group may continue to hold prejudiced or racist views towards other groups while engaging in discriminatory practices and excluding the out-group. Social comparison is the cognitive process through which individuals form a sense of self-identity and acknowledge their membership in a specific group. Individuals are then permitted to compare themselves to another group and evaluate their own value considering that group's performance.

According to a study by Tajfel, Flament, Billig, and Bundy (1971:175), the practice of classifying individuals into an in-group and an out-group resulted in prejudiced behaviour among members of these distinct groups. Turner (1999:32) argues that the classification of individuals solely according to the minimal group paradigm results in the formation of a social identity for said individuals. The individuals acknowledged and embraced their designated social category classification as a fundamental component of their sense of self-identity in the context. According to Tajfel and Turner (1979:40), the self-perception of individuals is organised along a continuum featuring two opposing poles that have an impact on their actions. At one end of the spectrum, an individual's unique and specific attributes will be more conspicuous, and each interaction with others will be influenced by said individual's particular qualities and intentions. Conversely, the interactions between two or more people will be influenced by their social identities as members of distinct or shared groups. Individuals will define themselves at this extreme end of the spectrum by incorporating the value implications associated with their social group memberships.

Within the framework of the conflict between indigenous farmers and Fulani herders, it is highly likely that the Fulani people, if they choose to identify as a collective, will adhere to the established norms and conduct associated with that specific group. The cultural practices and traditions of the Fulani herders may differ significantly from those of other civilizations. The indigenous Tiv cultivators residing in Benue state hold the belief that they are vulnerable and assert their right to protect their property and live in safety within their communities, unaffected by external forces' disturbances. These groups would have similar goals in protecting their social identity and might demonstrate aggressive conduct as a deterrent to other groups seeking to invade their domains (Muhammed, et al., 2024:142). The Fulanis, who reside primarily in Benue State and the Middle Belt, have cultivated an in-group identity predicated on their common means of subsistence, which consists primarily of cattle husbandry. Their shared aim is to effectively participate in this endeavour, and they work in conjunction to achieve this condition. It is their

conviction that Tiv individuals have unique goals in comparison to themselves, given that their primary occupation is agriculture, and they both depend on the same resource: land. As a result, they perceive themselves as superior to the Tiv people, who are regarded as the out-group. To achieve this, they may resort to discriminatory conduct, irrespective of the adverse consequences for Tiv farmers. On the other hand, Tiv farmers demonstrate bias against Fulani individuals on the grounds that they consider the Fulani to be indigenous occupants and legitimate proprietors of the southwestern region, as well as because their social identity is distinct from their own. Both the Fulani and Tiv communities place a high value on protecting their distinct social identities throughout this process.

In support of this viewpoint, Stewart (2009) contends that while economic and political factors are the primary catalysts for violent conflicts, the reinforcement of these confrontations is significantly influenced by the mobilisation of groups based on their identities, especially those of an ethnic or religious nature. The author emphasises that although motives function as a mechanism for mobilisation, a common identity is essential for cultivating trust among combatants, a critical element in the successful execution of any conflict. Stewart (2009:42) asserts that cultural identities play a substantial role in mobilisation, comprising a range of phenomena, including distinctions based on ethnicity, race, clan affiliation, religion, and sect. He asserted that while conflicts may stem from various causes, political and economic considerations predominantly dictate their course. Moreover, mobilisation for such conflicts frequently revolves around identities.

Additionally, Stewart (2009:44) argues that these identities are not founded on profound fundamental beliefs but rather on instrumental factors such as politics and resources. Baker (2003:10) underscored the importance of identity in resource and environmental conflicts. He concurs with Brosius' (1999: 288) assertion that "identity politics and contemporary environmental conflicts are inextricably intertwined."

However, this elucidation exclusively critiques the way in which individuals who identify with the in-group target the out-group with prejudice and discrimination, predicated solely on the classification of group membership. However, this elucidation fails to consider the way this interplay culminates in disputes between the two factions. Moreover, the precise group members who establish dominance over their counterparts throughout the engagement are not specified.

3.4 Conflict Theory

Considering conflict as a social process, the theory views conflicts because of the actions of members of a given society who are trying to change the rules in their favor to maximize their interests. It is also a process that is started when one group sees an opportunity to maximize its interests. The theory was formulated by Ralf Dahrendorf, a German sociologist. Dahrendorf (1929:32) starting point for the theory was the fact that an individual's behaviour is based on decisions on how to promote his own interest and how to promote or defend it when it is challenged by others.

Conflict theory provides an explanation for the fundamental causes of violence in every human setting and sector, regardless of whether it is an organised or unorganised sector. Conflict theory is based on the concept that most societal disputes are caused by disagreements between various social classes or groups. Idowu (2017: 12) opines that because of the limited availability of resources, every group must compete with other groups to improve their chances of acquiring additional resources. Organisations make attempts to safeguard their own interests, which results in the obstruction of the advancement of other groups. Individuals can display violent impulses, and these impulses manifest themselves in all relationships, particularly those between close groups or groups who depend on others to survive. Our feelings are influenced by external factors, which might lead to conflict with others in our immediate environment. Social transformation, such as the American Revolution and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, can be traced back to conflicts of this nature. It is common for us to erroneously believe that conflict is always a cause that divides people; nevertheless, it can have quite the opposite effect. Through the process of pitting two groups against one another, the relationships that exist between members of each group within itself become significantly stronger.

Social conflict serves a variety of functions. In accordance with conflict theory, the following are germane. As a result of social conflict, borders are established between various groups, which in turn results in a strong sense of unity among the individual members of a group. It is via social conflict that cohesion is fostered, as well as coalitions and affiliations with organisations from the outside world.

The presence of social conflict results in an increase in the level of cohesion inside a group as well as among many groups that would not typically come together. The establishment of a complete ego identity, autonomy, and the differentiation of personality from the outside world are all accomplished using conflict as a significant motivator. It is the similarities that exist between the members of a group, as well as the reinforcement of the group's knowledge of those commonalities, that serve to bind the group together. Conflict contributes to the formation and maintenance of group cohesion. There is a correlation between a high level of group cohesion and a high amount of conflict. Conflict serves as the foundation for the identity of every group. Conflict is, therefore, necessary for the functioning of a society.

Contrary to popular belief, conflict frequently has a negative impact on both the individual and the community. Rather than being explained by desires, impulses, and individual instances of behaviour, social conflict can be explained by a pattern of interaction. This pattern of interaction is what causes social conflict. There is a correlation between the structure of a group's cooperative relationships and aggressive behaviour. The degree of group cohesion is the structural variable that is responsible for the direct hostility that occurs. According to the definition provided by Coser (1913-2003), direct aggression is "aggression expressed towards members of the group." Because of this, high levels of group cohesion are associated with high levels of violence.

There are several ways in which conflict can influence group structures, including the strengthening of intimate ties, which may tend to repress conflict. If a conflict arises despite efforts to suppress it, it tends to be disruptive to the relationship due to the intensity with which it is conveyed. It is possible to ascribe this intensity to the whole engagement of the personality as well as the accumulation of feelings of anger. Therefore, it is reasonable for the participants to be concerned about conflict because of the potential implications that it could have on the relationship.

Idowu (2017:15) argues that conflict with another group usually defines group structure hegemony in most cases. When conflict occurs between groups, the members of each group become more cohesive. Groups in conflict expect their individual members to be entirely involved. A group engaged in continued struggle tends to be intolerant of individual deviations within the group. A

member of a threatened group may be allowed only limited departures from group unity. Those who choose to deviate must either volunteer or be forced to withdraw from the group.

According to the New World Encyclopedia (2019), the following are the four fundamental assumptions that underpin contemporary thought regarding conflict, which include:

Competition: Every social interaction is built on the foundation of rivalry for limited resources, such as money, leisure time, sexual partners, and other such things. Human relationships are characterised by competition rather than consensus between the parties involved.

Structural Inequality: Each social organisation is characterised by the presence of power and reward disparities. Individuals and organisations that stand to gain from a certain structure make it their mission to ensure that it is preserved.

Revolution: Change occurs because of conflict between social class's competing interests rather than through adaptation. It is often abrupt and revolutionary rather than evolutionary.

According to Egbuta (2018), the struggle over grazing areas and scarce resources has, throughout the years, resulted in persistent and escalating violent conflicts in terms of frequency, intensity, and geographical extent. These conflicts have been a significant source of conflict. The frequency of confrontations between herders is a result of a confluence of climatic and demographic forces, notably because of desertification brought about by climate change and the increase of the population. One of the primary factors that contribute to conflicts between herders and farmers is the fact that both groups require land, albeit for quite different reasons.

Maclean (2019), pointed out that Fulani herding families are constantly on the road, looking for pastures and water for their animals. They do not wish to acquire ownership of the enormous environment that they travel over on an annual basis. On the other hand, given that farmers live and work in the same location, land ownership appears to be of critical importance to their continued existence. When families increase in size, the grazing lands are typically converted into farmlands over time. At the same time, the historic migration routes are cut off, and herders trample into the fields of farmers. Because of this, the farmers killed cattle, and the herdsman were able to exact their vengeance during the retaliation (Maclean, 2019).

Conflict theory has been criticised for lacking the presence of the study of conflict theory in mainstream research. For instance, Lee (2019) pointed out that most of the scientific studies on conflict focused mostly on individual rather than interpersonal conflict. Based on this argument, he proposed the possibility that there is no scientific basis to support conflict theory. Additionally, he criticised the idea of being restricted to circumstances. According to his hypothesis, applying the theory to the dynamics of families is challenging since there is a limited connection between the two. In addition to this, he critiqued the theory for its pessimistic outlook on the affirmation of the conflicting state of society as a normal activity.

Lee (2019) observed that conflict theory dismisses all acts of compassion, democracy, and the civil rights movement, viewing them as deliberate strategies to manipulate the public rather than to foster peace and social harmony. Lee (2019) also challenged the paradoxical nature of conflict theory, arguing that conflict might persist even inside the less powerful group. If the individual perceives conflict as an inherent aspect of human nature, then the discussions on conflict resolution are considered outdated and devoid of significance. He argued that conflict theory is only relevant to situations including war, hunger, and political strife. Nevertheless, the idea of conflict is applicable to the disputes between herders and farmers in Nigeria. The conflict is rooted in the competition for resources and land between herders and farmers.

3.5 Realistic Group Conflict Theory

During the 1960s, Muzafer Sherif introduced a paradigm shift away from focusing on individuals to elucidate the causes of prejudice and discrimination (Valentim, 2010:592). He postulated in his theory of intergroup conflict that social groups are mutually dependent on one another due to their functional connections. Moreover, he posits that social collectives establish objectives for themselves and endeavour to accomplish them. Cooperative and positive relations exist between two or more groups when their interests do not conflict and they enjoy a mutually beneficial relationship. However, when dissimilar organisations set forth identical goals, their reciprocal dependence becomes incongruous, and competition escalates. Rivalries among communities over scarce resources, be they of a material or immaterial nature, territorial significance, or financial worth, have the potential to generate animosity and incite violence (Sherif, 1966:78; Valentim, 2010:594).

By implementing this theory, indigenous Tiv and Igala cultivators and Fulani herders represent distinct groups with divergent objectives regarding finite resources. For example, the Fulani people contend that the Tiv and Igala farmers are utilising cows to destroy their farm crops, whereas the Tiv and Igala farmers assert that the farmers are encroaching upon their grazing routes, leaving little to no land for their cattle; this has led to competition between the two ethnic groups. This includes the herdsmen's policy of permitting their cattle to trespass into the fields of the farmers to consume the crops and defecate along the designated path or on the farm itself, as well as the farmers' propensity to extend the boundaries of their farms to include livestock routes (Moritz, 2010:140). The protracted rivalry for land escalated to the point where it ultimately resulted in intergroup hostilities between the Fulani and Benue's indigenous cultivators. It can be deduced from the information supplied that organisations that fail to attain their objectives and ambitions through interdependence will inevitably develop antagonistic relationships because of their divergent interests.

Despite the considerable contributions that this theory has rendered to the study of intergroup relations, its limitations must not be overlooked. Over the duration of human history, numerous acts of violence have transpired between various factions across the globe, devoid of any discernible practical or utilitarian justification. By employing the minimal group paradigm, Tajfel (1970:100) demonstrated that intergroup prejudice can result from merely categorising individuals as members of a group. This assertion holds validity in situations where in-group identification is minimal, conflicts of interest do not exist, and prior encounters with intergroup hostility have not occurred.

3.6 The Rational Choice Theory

The research is founded upon the rational choice theory, an idea that Cesare Beccaria initially formulated during the latter part of the 18th century. According to Somerville (2000), human social bonds are formed through a dynamic process that is shaped by particular and distinct contexts. Furthermore, he posited that human interaction and organisation could be conceptualised as a discrete phase of evolutionary development, during which specific individuals assimilate behavioural patterns that are optimally suited to their unique environments (Somerville, 2000:22). He argued that the most efficient method for investigating social connections in human society is to employ an evolutionary framework that is informed by rational choice theory. This approach

emphasises the concept that an individual's conduct is motivated by the pursuit of personal gain or gratification and that this is the primary determinant of their interaction with their environment. Therefore, human collaboration is predominantly achieved via the establishment of social structures that promote shared advantages; understanding how this structure is formed fundamentally clarifies social interactions in a broad sense.

According to the rational choice theory, individuals have the capacity to make autonomous decisions and engage in behaviour that optimises advantages while minimising disadvantages. The achievement of cooperation is feasible via the application of human reasoning and negotiation. For example, Fulani pastoralists will deliberately select habitats in regions characterised by strong social ties and intersecting social dynamics. They may engage in cooperative efforts and form multifaceted social networks with members of the community and traditional authorities to obtain shared resources and safeguard against potential threats or disruptions. By way of reciprocity for benevolence, traditional chiefs and authorities may be bestowed with gifts. To attain benefits, individuals and organisations engage in social interactions by making logical decisions in various contexts, including collaboration, conflict, and social networks.

The rational choice theory places significant emphasis on the prioritisation of individual self-interest over collective objectives, as it is grounded in the viewpoint of a single actor and not in the interactions of multiple individuals. An example of this can be seen in the social behaviours of Fulani herders residing in rural pastoral areas of Benue State. While these behaviours serve to ensure their own survival, they may have adverse repercussions on the indigenous cultivators in the area. The enduring disputes between farmers and herdsman are predominantly attributable to the herders' unilateral actions; they often graze their livestock on agricultural fields and contested grazing pastures.

The institutional framework that facilitates the integration of herdsman into the farming community is consistent with the rational choice theory, which considers the social ties that exist between farmers and herders. The application of this theoretical framework would provide a more comprehensive comprehension of the characteristics and intricacies of conflicts that emerge between farmers and herdsman in rural areas occupied by grazing animals. Furthermore, it would

provide insight into the way environmental changes, land and water resources, and conflict dynamics impact cooperative relations and dynamics of conflict. Moreover, it is advantageous to acquire knowledge regarding the impact that economic, religious, and cultural factors exert on the prevalence of violence or cooperation between pastoralists and agriculturalists in Benue state's rural grazing regions.

In the same way, according to Paul Lederach's theory of conflict transformation, conflicts that arise endure a variety of transformative processes. Conscientisation or deconscientisation, articulation or disarticulation, escalation or de-escalation, polarisation or depolarisation, and articulation or disarticulation are among these processes (Miall, 2004:26). The concept emphasises that the way a conflict is perceived is predominantly determined by elements including the surrounding environment, the interpersonal relationships of the parties involved, which have been formed by prior engagements, and their recollections of previous occurrences. Additionally, what potential events may transpire soon. Cultural, institutional, governmental, and social dimensions—including roles, norms, rules, and regulations—as well as the historical evolution of a society—are essential components to consider when analysing violent community conflicts. According to Lederach (1997:15), the significance of the party-party relationship cannot be overstated, given that it often triggers conflict and hinders peacebuilding efforts even after the end of hostilities. Additionally, personal beliefs, cultural, educational, and communicative influences, and memories all play a substantial role in shaping the socially constructed perception of the situation held by each party. The way societies commemorate and reconstruct their past often plays a crucial role in their endeavours to sow discord, rendering it a critical concern within the domains of cultural preservation and reconciliation.

Therefore, in the light of conflict transformation theory, peacebuilders should consider the following stages as they strive to achieve peace: Actor transformations refer to internal alterations that occur within the parties involved or the advent of new parties.

Transformations of issues: altering the central emphasis of contentious matters.

-- Rule transformations: modifications to the governing norms or regulations of the conflict.

Structural transformations refer to comprehensive alterations in the power dynamics and relationship structures that occur within the context of a conflict (Miall, 2004:24).

By employing this theoretical framework to analyse the violent confrontation between herders and farmers, it becomes evident that a minor disagreement or altercation between a single herder and a solitary farmer concerning crop damage possesses the potential to escalate into widespread violence that affects entire communities and ultimately claims substantial lives. Patterns of change can potentially be discerned more easily through an analysis of the actors and organisations implicated, their conduct, the interests at stake, and the goals they pursue during the conflict. The potential cause for the escalation of the protracted and recurring violent dispute between pastoralists and farmers in Nigeria could be the division between indigenous populations and settlers, which exacerbates the animosity between sedentary farmers and nomadic farmers. The division between indigenous and colonial populations gives rise to animosity between the two factions.

The state's incapability to effectively manage the conflict between colonisers and indigenous people exacerbates the severity of land disputes between farmers and herdsmen. This phenomenon is evident in regions like Benue, where conflicts persist even though traditional authorities continue to demand grazing rights in return for monetary compensation from herders. An additional element contributing to these conflicts is the presumption that herdsmen are merely settlers lacking legitimate land ownership. While the rational choice theory has encountered scrutiny due to its neglect of unequal power dynamics in society and its oversimplification of human interactions to economic transactions (Zey, 1998:110), it does enhance our understanding of social relationships between people of various ethnic and religious backgrounds.

3.7 The State and the Political Economy of Peacebuilding in Africa

The role of the state continues to be crucial in the pursuit of peace in Africa. In postcolonial Africa, the State assumed a crucial function through its authority over governance processes and the security apparatus. This grants the state significant sway over the policymakers and implementers engaged in the state's reconstruction endeavours. The main objective of this study is to investigate the political economy of peacebuilding in Africa, as examined by Claude Ake, Mahmood Mamndani, and other prominent African scholars of the twenty-first century. Due to his prominence as the preeminent African political economist, Ake's work is significant. He developed concepts regarding economics, politics, and government rehabilitation in peripheral civilisations. The establishment of the state in postcolonial Africa, according to Ake (2000), can be directly

attributed to the impact of colonialism. The foundation of the society is inherently fragile and flawed due to its colonial origins. This is because its establishment occurred on a precarious groundwork that exacerbated the division of postcolonial African societies along religious and ethnic boundaries.

Despite assertions by the ruling elites that Africa has been emancipated from its colonial oppressors, the State continues to manifest incongruities, including inadequate governance institutions, deteriorating infrastructure, and significant fiscal and macroeconomic deficits. Due to the fragility of its foundation, the State is frequently perceived as perpetually entangled in crises precipitated by centrifugal forces seeking to undermine it for their own benefit. African political economists, including Mahmood Mamdani, Claude Ake, Tade Aina, John MukumMbaku, and Julius Ihovbere, have conducted an exhaustive examination of the factors that have contributed to violent and political crises in Africa over the past thirty years. Agbiboa (2022:212) and Gbadeyan, Awe and Omobuwajo (2019:17) contend that in postcolonial African nations characterised by patrimonial alliances and the misuse of public funds for the advantage of the governing elites, conflict is an unavoidable consequence of the political, economic, and social structures. According to contemporary African political economists, the political economy of postcolonial nations should serve as the foundation for peacebuilding in Africa. Numerous armed factions have proliferated because of resource disputes, ubiquitous poverty, and inadequate government structures that characterise these cultures. The present theoretical framework examines the Boko Haram insurgency and the herders-farmers conflict (Ukamaka, Danjuma, and Igbokwe, 2016:152; George et al., 2022:280; Ikhuoso et al., 2020:123104).

To achieve successful peacebuilding in peripheral social formations, it is critical to give precedence to authentic reconciliation, state reconstruction, and the effective utilisation of media to alleviate tensions between farmers and herdsman. This objective must be achieved notwithstanding the adverse consequences that climate change may have on human advancement. Vigilant oversight and effective regulation are imperative in addressing the proliferation of weapons and the illicit utilisation of small firearms and ammunition. These objects are frequently utilised in criminal activities such as mass murder, abduction of unsuspecting people, violence against women and girls, animal larceny, and agricultural field destruction. Typically, these illicit firearms are obtained through clandestine marketplaces (Small Arms Survey, 2019:55). While the

political economy may analyse the issue through a historical lens, it neglects to adequately consider the interdependence that exists between climate change and the subsequent conflicts that emerge in the Sahel region of Africa. Due to the scarcity of agricultural resources in this region, pastoralists and cultivators have been engaged in protracted disputes.

3.8 Lederach's Peace-building Theory and Herder–Farmers Conflicts in Nigeria

The Peace-building Theory of Paul Lederach is a well-known and strategic framework that aims to promote peace in the twenty-first century. The notion posits that conflict is an intrinsic and unavoidable facet of human society. Nevertheless, it is an exceedingly intricate subject that surpasses the understanding of a great number of policymakers and specialists. Conflict is a multifaceted phenomenon characterised by the participation of numerous entities and intricate tiers of antagonistic exchanges (Lederach, 2012:11). Lederach emphasised the criticality of comprehending the involvement of peacebuilders and conflict actors alike to achieve global peace amidst a history of strife. As an approach to fostering enduring peacebuilding endeavours in the modern era, Lederach presented a five-step framework for conflict transformation in developing nations. Understanding the conflict's structure is the initial step; subsequently, the strategy for resolving the issues is determined. According to Lederach (quoted in Wilkin, 2016:43), knowledge of the conflict resolution process provides peace architects with insight into the grievances of the parties involved and how those grievances can be alleviated.

An additional pivotal element in Lederach's approach to resolving the conflict between farmers and herdsmen is the legitimate acquisition of limited or scarce resources that have served as the source of the disagreements. Within the Nigerian context, it is imperative that the government demonstrate a resolute commitment to allocating grazing areas for herders while simultaneously ensuring that this practice does not encroach upon the landowners' rights to cultivate their fields and territories. The principal aim of the National Livestock Transformation Plan, which is implemented by the Federal Government of Nigeria, is to establish agricultural harmony in the country. This approach considers the ongoing concerns of both pastoralists and agriculturalists, ensuring their continued advancement.

In Lederach's peacebuilding theory, the final two components are reconciliation and coordination. To ensure a successful resolution to the persistent dispute between herders and farmers in the RUGA, strict enforcement of policies intended to mitigate the challenges encountered by these

factions by the government and all pertinent stakeholders is essential (Lederach, 2012:14). Lederach proposed that tactical reconciliation of parties through intermediate-level leaders should constitute the foundation of conflict resolution in contemporary society (Wright, 2004:493).

Lederach's theory is highly pertinent to this research as it offers a comprehensive framework for resolving conflicts between pastoralists and agriculturalists. The passage emphasises the importance of authentic reconciliation between the aggrieved parties and individuals concerned, the implementation of ranches for herdsman, and the elimination of extensive open grazing practices. These strategies aim to address the fundamental factors contributing to the complex ethno-religious animosity and conflict within the RUGA. The notion holds substantial importance as it implies that everyone involved in challenging conditions bears a critical responsibility in resolving the conflicts among the herders-farmers. To efficiently address conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria, active participation from key stakeholders, such as governmental and non-governmental organisations, is imperative. A variety of groups and individuals are involved in this context, including women, youth, vigilante organisations, ethnic associations, religious institutions, business sector representatives, and international community members. It is vital that they participate in the provision of reconciliation and mediation services to ensure the establishment of long-lasting peacebuilding initiatives.

To comprehensively analyze peacebuilding approaches, it is highly beneficial to take into consideration the study conducted by Muhammed et al. (2024:142) in the Damka village in Plateau state. The conclusion of his study was that for peace to exist between the two groups, it was essential that herders required the same land and water resources as farmers. Damkak people said they wanted peace but with all the land and water. This illustrates the notion that truce resolutions are not sustainable since they are stepping-stones of peace, where the negotiator makes the decision to wage war. A similar point is made by the Programme Against Conflict at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. It states that past attempts to avoid violent conflict and find short-term fixes to the problem have often backfired and resulted in a continuation of violence. This exemplifies the current situation in which the truce resolutions between RUGA communities have failed time and time again, often resulting in a continuation of violence and an ever-growing hostility between both parties.

Peacebuilding is defined as a range of measures targeted to reduce the likelihood of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by addressing the root causes and effects of the conflict. This is different from peace-making and involves several different strategies. Peacebuilding is highly pertinent and important to the RUGA issue. It is safe to say that the mutual coexistence of farmers and herders that lived in years gone by is all but gone. With violence between the two groups at an all-time high and the state in an ever-decreasing levels of security, something must be done to resolve the conflict to avoid an escalation in violence between the two groups.

3.9 Integrated Theoretical Framework for Peacebuilding

The theoretical framework for analyzing "Inter-Group Relations and Peacebuilding Among Farmers and Herders in Rural Grazing Areas in Benue State, Nigeria" can be grounded in multiple theories, including Eco-Violence Theory, Social Identity Theory, Conflict Theory, Realistic Group Conflict Theory, and Rational Choice Theory. Each of these theories provides unique insights into the dynamics of the conflict and peacebuilding efforts between these groups. By integrating these theories, we can comprehensively understand the factors driving inter-group relations and the potential strategies for peacebuilding in Benue State.

While Eco-Violence Theory posits that competition over scarce environmental resources can lead to violent conflict, in the context of Benue State, where farmers and herders compete for access to land and water resources, this theory helps explain the root causes of the clashes between the two groups. Climate change, desertification, and population growth have exacerbated the scarcity of arable land, forcing herders to migrate southward in search of grazing areas, often encroaching on farmland. The ensuing competition leads to violent confrontations. Eco-violence theory thus frames the conflict as a struggle for survival in an environment of diminishing resources, with violence becoming a rational strategy for securing access to those resources. Peacebuilding efforts, according to this theory, would need to address the environmental dimensions of the conflict, such as sustainable land use practices, improved water management, and climate adaptation strategies. Social Identity Theory helps explain how individuals' self-conception is tied to their membership in specific social groups, which can lead to inter-group conflict when identities become polarized. In Benue State, farmers and herders belong to distinct ethnic and cultural groups, and these differences are often amplified by social and political forces. The conflict is not just about resources but also about protecting group identity, status, and dignity. The theory suggests that

individuals derive a sense of pride and self-esteem from their group affiliations, and when their group's interests are threatened, they may engage in conflict to protect the group's integrity. For peacebuilding, this theory highlights the importance of fostering a shared identity that transcends group boundaries, such as promoting a collective "Benue identity" or encouraging cooperation through community-building activities that foster mutual respect and understanding between the groups.

Conflict Theory, rooted in Marxist thought, views social conflict as a product of inequality and the competition for power and resources. Applied to the farmer-herder conflict in Benue State, it suggests that the violent clashes are the result of underlying structural inequalities. Herders, often marginalized in terms of political representation and access to resources, are pushed into conflict as a means of asserting their rights and gaining access to land. Farmers, on the other hand, may feel entitled to the land based on historical claims and the perception that they are the rightful owners. Conflict Theory underscores the need to address systemic inequalities, such as unequal land distribution, lack of government support for pastoralists, and political marginalization. For peacebuilding, this theory suggests that resolving the conflict requires addressing these power imbalances, such as through land reform, inclusive governance, and policies that ensure equitable resource distribution.

Realistic Group Conflict Theory also posits that conflict arises when groups compete for limited resources. In the Benue State context, both farmers and herders perceive that the land and water they need for their livelihoods are in short supply, creating direct competition. This theory emphasizes that inter-group hostility is not just based on perceived threats to identity or status but on tangible, material competition.

The violence between the two groups can be seen as a natural outcome of this competition, as each group seeks to maximize its share of the scarce resources. According to Realistic Group Conflict Theory, peacebuilding efforts should focus on reducing this competition by providing alternative livelihoods, creating fair resource-sharing mechanisms, and implementing policies that promote the efficient and equitable use of land and water.

Rational Choice Theory posits that individuals and groups engage in conflict when they believe the benefits outweigh the costs. In the case of farmers and herders in Benue State, both groups may calculate that engaging in violent conflict is a rational choice if it increases their access to resources

or protects their livelihood. For instance, herders may see grazing on farmland as necessary for the survival of their livestock, while farmers may see the destruction of their crops by cattle as a threat to their food security, leading both to rationalize violent responses. Peacebuilding, from a Rational Choice Theory perspective, would involve altering the cost-benefit calculations of both groups. This could be achieved by increasing the costs of violence (e.g., through law enforcement and penalties) or by increasing the benefits of peaceful coexistence (e.g., through economic incentives for cooperation, compensation for losses, and improved security).

By integrating these theories, a multi-faceted approach to peacebuilding in Benue State can be developed. Eco-violence theory highlights the need for environmental interventions to reduce resource scarcity, while Social Identity Theory emphasizes the importance of addressing identity-based tensions. Conflict Theory and Realistic Group Conflict Theory point to the need for structural reforms to reduce inequality and resource competition, and Rational Choice Theory suggests that altering the incentives for conflict and peace can guide the behaviour of the groups involved.

Peacebuilding strategies should thus focus on both the material and psychological dimensions of the conflict, addressing the root causes of resource scarcity and inequality while also promoting dialogue, cooperation, and shared identities between the groups. This holistic approach is crucial for sustainable peace in the region.

3.10 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter provides a theoretical overview of the results, which is presented in subsequent chapters. By creating correlations between the research and established theories and conceptual debates, a more thorough understanding of previously proposed concepts pertaining to the given challenges and objectives is attained while also identifying shortcomings in the current body of literature. The current corpus of research on farmer-herder interactions has a tendency towards structural interpretations, hence neglecting certain crucial concerns. Furthermore, relying only on one theory hinders a thorough examination of the current situation. Each occurrence of conflict or cooperation is unique and requires comprehensive analysis and investigation. This research seeks to rectify these shortcomings by using and adopting a multi-theory method to investigate the

interactions between farmers and herders, with a particular emphasis on conflicts. Since there is no complete theory that can provide comprehensive theoretical explanations for the intergroup relations between the herders and farmers, hence each of the theories complements themselves, and the weakness of one is complemented by the strength of another. The analysis is performed by systematically examining the problems using a case study approach. This chapter explores the specific methodological strategy used in the investigation.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter addressed the theoretical foundation upon which this investigation is based. Therefore, this part is devoted to the research methodology, which includes the strategy, instrument, and techniques used in conducting the study. The study emphasises the research strategy and research methods used. Hence, to prevent the selection of unsuitable research techniques, it is essential to meticulously choose a research approach. Creswell (2012:12) defines research methodology as a systematic approach that links procedures to results and guides a researcher's selection and use of methodologies, including survey, ethnography, experimental research, and other comparable methods. Creswell (2012:47) asserts further that techniques refer to the specific tactics and procedures that a researcher plans to use, such as In-depth Interviews (IDI), Surveys, or Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

Thus, it assesses the technique and structure, population, sample size, research equipment, and practical procedures. Neuman (2007:8) opined that methodology is a structured and clearly defined strategy or set of principles used to perform activities or work processes. Scientific investigation is the methodical procedure of collecting, documenting, scrutinising, and deciphering facts about a certain matter or predicament. It encompasses the utilisation of fundamental ideas, assumptions, and ideals that act as the justification for research endeavours and the established facts used to reach dependable results (Tuli, 2010:19).

Survey techniques play a vital role in the research approach of social science. This is because survey techniques have the benefit of gathering a significant quantity of information from a wider population. Furthermore, it may be used to enhance the acquisition of individual and societal knowledge, concepts, and perspectives. The survey research technique is a descriptive strategy used to gather data from a representative sample of the community under study. As per Krathwohl (1993:5), this often includes many elements, such as the research design, the study population, the sampling strategy, the sample size, the procedures of data collection, and the process of data analysis.

Data collection adopted a multimedia strategy. Both audio and written records were used in various combinations. All interviews were digitally recorded after seeking prior permission from the respondent. Written records were frequently taken after interviews with nomadic Fulani, who often proved reluctant to have their voices recorded for fear that it may be used as evidence against them by officials or rival farmers during disputes. Photography was also used to record evidence of any events taking place in the vicinity of the research team that they themselves were not able to witness, such as cattle grazing in crop fields directly. All photographic evidence was categorized and indexed, and the photo index forms serve as a guide to any future research in neighbouring areas where the same events or issues may be observed. This data collection strategy was designed to maximize data quality and was influenced by various pilot studies conducted by the author in Nigeria, as well as consultation with fellow researchers who are experienced in fieldwork in similar rural West African settings.

Interviews were used to record accounts, attitudes, and perceptions of farmer-herder interactions, as well as group image and identity. A range of key informants, such as traditional leaders and government officials, were also approached to obtain their views on farmer-herder relations in their areas. This approach situates qualitative research methodologies within an interpretivist epistemological framework, whereby a phenomenon is studied in its natural context using multiple methods. This contrasts with more conventional approaches to farmer-herder relations in Nigeria, which tend to focus on large-scale survey-based work to measure economic trends and demographic changes. This research sought to gain an understanding of the complexity of farmer-herder conflict and cooperation and, therefore, steered away from simplistic variables-based research.

4.2 Research Design

A research design is an all-encompassing framework comprising the strategy, structure, and plan of an investigation, which is meticulously customised to the nature of the research being carried out. A research design is defined by Flick (2011) as the methodical investigation of techniques employed in a particular field, including the scrutiny of the fundamental concepts, methodologies, standards, and postulates that underpin that discipline. According to Creswell (2012), the purpose of elucidating a study design as an approach is to enhance the research's validity by disclosing its

framework. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009:12) define a research design as the fundamental principle that directs an investigator in the execution of an investigation. Furthermore, Bryman and Bell (2015) offer an elaborate elucidation of the term "research design" as a mechanism that establishes a systematic framework for the gathering and analysis of data. The research design provides the framework for this. The definition of a research design could be the set of guiding principles that govern the implementation of a scientific investigation. The methodology outlined in the text pertains to the procedure the investigator followed to collect data from a multitude of sources, encompassing subjects, components, and units of examination. The implementation of this methodology is critical in the stages of data planning, collection, and analysis, which culminate in the interpretation of the findings (Brink, Van Der Walt, & Van Rensburg, 2012:5).

Explanatory, exploratory, causal, evaluative, descriptive, intervention and participatory action research are all viable approaches to research design. The selection of a design for a particular study may vary depending on the characteristics of the research being conducted. The methodology employed in this investigation is descriptive research design. A comprehensive elucidation of the reasoning behind this decision is provided below.

A research design that integrates qualitative methods with descriptive and explanatory approaches is utilised for the study. Particularly potent descriptive research is because of the following elements: The function of descriptive research is to shed light on the existence and magnitude of social problems. It may serve as the foundation for social policy initiatives that are more precisely targeted and have the potential to inspire social action (Vaus, 2022:78). It becomes progressively more difficult to deny the existence of challenges when they are articulated with expertise. In addition, the primary objective of descriptive and explanatory research is to faithfully document an occurrence or phenomenon in its natural environment.

Moreover, its objective is to verify accurate information. Qualitative methodologies are selected for the study on account of their desirable characteristics, which are highly regarded by social scientists engaged in social and behavioural research. One of these capabilities is the capacity to determine the rate at which answers are generated in response to exploratory open-ended questions. In the same way, the intentional application of established methodologies is to solve problems, collect data, and derive unanticipated results, as well as to make findings with broader implications beyond the scope of the specific research endeavour. Hence, a descriptive research

approach is employed in this study, as it seeks to furnish information and faithfully portray social issues or events in their authentic state.

Moreover, its objective is to identify a unique research concern as perceived by the indigenous community within a specific context. One notable advantage of qualitative research is its capacity to offer exhaustive depictions of the experiences that individuals or groups have with a particular subject or topic under investigation. Qualitative research methods are distinguished from quantitative approaches by virtue of their adaptability and versatility. This suggests that the participants are afforded the opportunity to provide responses to the research inquiries in their native language, as opposed to simply offering a binary "yes" or "no" answer. The investigator intends to collect a diverse array of viewpoints from various stakeholders, such as clergy, religious leaders, farmers, and herdsmen, as well as security services and traditional authorities, within the conflict-affected communities of Benue State. This objective could potentially be accomplished through the implementation of a qualitative methodology.

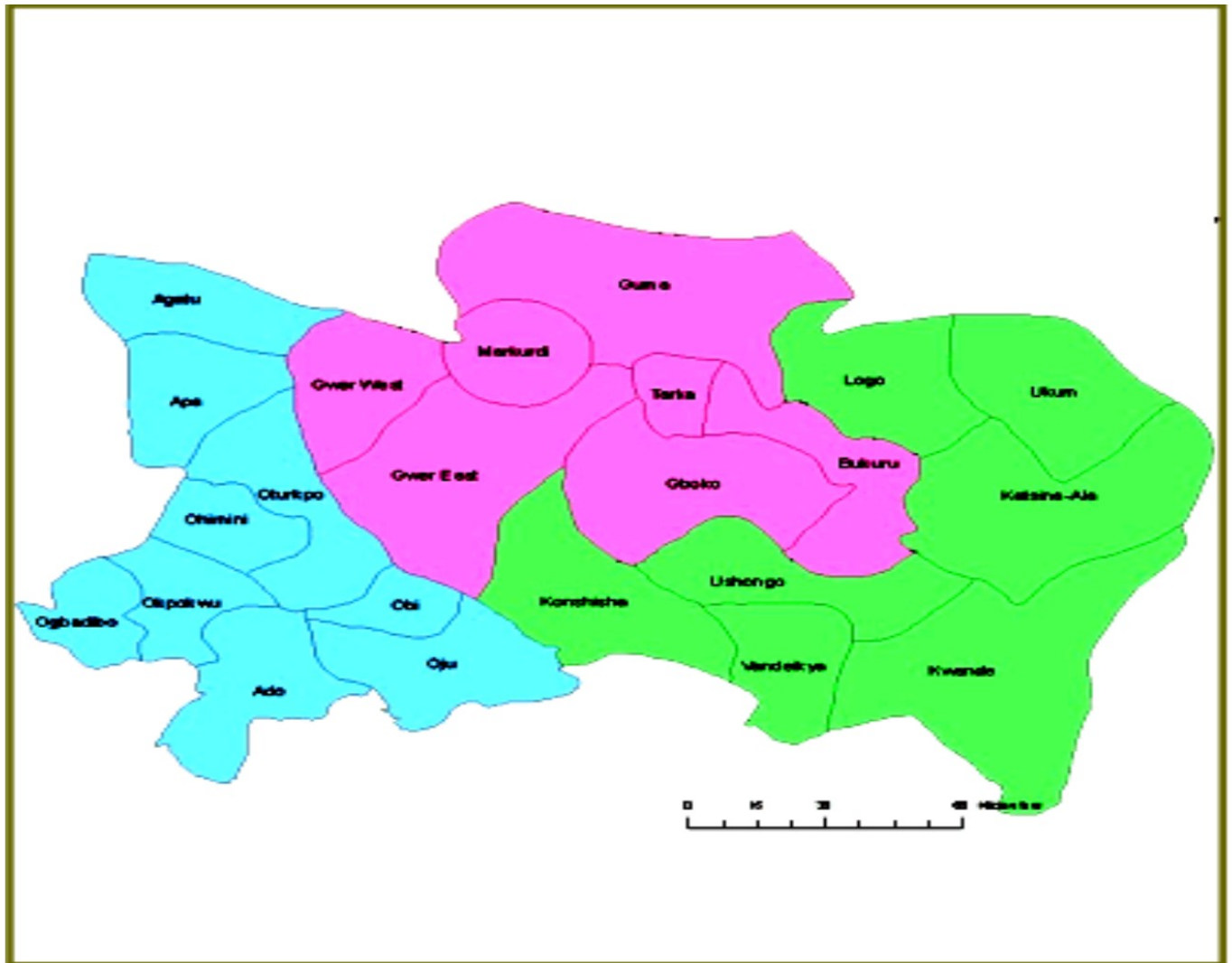
4.3 Study Population and Study Site

The term "study population" denotes the complete collection of items, subjects, or individuals that meet a specific set of criteria. A population refers to an assemblage of items, actions, or people who possess a common characteristic that an investigator wishes to examine (Mouton, 2011). A population is defined succinctly by Sekaran and Bougie (2016) as the complete assemblage of individuals, occurrences, or objects that hold relevance to the researcher and are intended for investigation. The sample population, as defined by Wiid and Diggines (2009), comprises all individuals or entities from which information is necessary. The phrase "study population" pertains to the specific demographic regarding which the researcher aims to derive conclusions through the selection of the sample for the present investigation (Babbie & Mouton, 2002; Polit & Beck, 2012).

According to the Nigeria Population Census (2020), the total population of Nigeria by population projection as of 2022 stands at 216,783,381 inhabitants. However, as of 2022, Benue State had an estimated population of 6,141,284, as reported by the National Population Commission. The research utilises the term "population" to refer to the entire populace, which comprises all 23 Local Government Areas in the state. Hence, the study population for the study include Indigenous farmers, Fulani pastoralists, traditional rulers, clergy, AFAN, MACBAN, and security agencies in the 23 local government areas in Benue state. The persistent conflicts in the region have affected

pastoralists, farmers, traditional rulers, religious leaders, males, females, and minors, both directly and indirectly. The following is a map illustration of the geographical features of the state of Benue:

Figure 4.1: Map of Benue State Showing the Local Government and the different Zones



Key: Zone A (Green), Zone B (Pink), and Zone C (Blue)

Established in 1976, Benue State was one of seven states established under the military government. The location in question obtains its name from the Benue River, the second most sizable river in Nigeria, following the Niger River. The state is bounded to the southwest by Nasarawa State, to the north by Taraba State, to the east by Kogi State, and to the southwest by Enugu State. To the south, it shares borders with Ebonyi and Cross-Rivers States. Moreover, to

the southeast, the territory shares a frontier with Cameroon. The ethnic groups that make up most of the state area are Idoma, Tiv, Orring, and Igede. The ethnic composition of the minority population in Benue includes, among others, the Igbo, Etulo, and Jukun peoples. Makurdi functions as the regional administrative hub. Benue is a highly agriculturally productive region renowned for cultivating a wide variety of commodities, such as palm trees, citrus, mangoes, sweet potatoes, tapioca, soybeans, guinea maize, flax, yams, sesame, and rice.

The current Benue State is a constituent part of an administrative region that was initially formed in the early 1900s from the protectorate of Northern Nigeria. The region was formerly referred to as Munshi Province until 1918. Nevertheless, it was subsequently rechristened in homage to the Benue River, a prominent geographical element. Benue is a Nigerian state renowned for its abundant rivers and agricultural prowess, which has earned it the moniker "breadbasket of Nigeria." As a result, it is commonly referred to as the "food basket" of the nation due to its abundant and varied agricultural produce, which comprises guinea corn, rice, yam, cassava, legumes, potatoes, soybeans, maize, sorghum, and millet. Included among the items mentioned are beniseed, cocoyam, potatoes, and flax. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the state is responsible for more than 70 per cent of Nigeria's soybean output and possesses the most expansive river systems nationwide. This engenders advantageous circumstances for prosperous irrigation-based agriculture throughout the dry season, in addition to prospects for the establishment of an inland waterway network and the growth of the fishery industry. Gypsum, limestone, kaolin, anhydride, natural gas, petroleum oil, salt, lead and zinc, coal, clay, barites, gemstones, calcite, and magnetite are among the state's abundant mineral reserves (Agbegebdi, 2013).

The study intentionally chose Benue State as the designated region because of the numerous confrontations between herders and farmers since 2009. These tensions have also significantly contributed to the nation's food insecurity, as the state is renowned as the country's 'food basket' due to its abundant and varied agricultural yield, encompassing yam, rice, beans, cassava, potatoes, maize, soya beans, sorghum, corn, millet, cocoyam, potatoes, guinea corn, flax and beniseed. Additionally, the state is responsible for more than 70 per cent of Nigeria's soybean production (March 2013:21). Additionally, it possesses one of the most extensive networks of rivers in the nation, which presents opportunities for a prosperous fishing industry, irrigation-based dry season farming, and the establishment of an inland waterway. Benue North-East, North-West, and South

constitute the three senatorial zones that comprise the state. A total of three Local Government Areas were chosen from the senatorial zones, specifically Ado, Guma, and Katsina-Ala. The three Local Government Areas (LGAs) were selected in accordance with the presence or absence of distinct zones of guinea savannah, rainforest, and mangrove vegetation within each region. Moreover, the agricultural practitioners residing in these Local Government Areas (LGAs) exhibit expertise in the cultivation of tuber crops, which require an extended period to germinate. From 2009 to 2022, the LGAs were the principal arena for violent confrontations between Fulani herders and farmers. Hence, the present study concentrated on five villages, namely Agila, Katsina-Ala, Abinsi, Gbajimba and Igumale, which were the sites of the most severe and unregulated acts of violence.

Therefore, the sample population comprises agricultural practitioners who own and operate farms in the five nearby villages of Agila, Abinsi, Gbajimba, Igumale, and Katsina-Ala, in addition to Fulani herders who migrate, and Fulani settlements located within these communities. The study encompasses the participation of both the traditional leaders of the chosen villages and the leaders of Fulani settlements situated within those communities. The research concentrates on the Benue State Chapter of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), the principal trade association for Nigerian cattle herders. Moreover, the Benue State Chapter of the All-Farmers Association in Nigeria (AFAN) participated in conjunction with religious leaders and clergymen from the five selected communities.

4.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Sampling is a technique utilised to select a subset of groups or individuals that accurately represent the entire population. The subset of the intended population chosen to participate in a research endeavour constitutes the sample. Sampling is conducted with the primary aim of ensuring that the selected population is represented in an equitable and impartial manner (Polit & Beck, 2012; Mouton, 2002). Sampling is a commonly employed research technique that seeks to reduce the financial and time investments associated with the research endeavour. It involves selecting a representative sample of individuals from a larger population for the purpose of generating descriptions and drawing conclusions. In the present context, qualitative research participants are chosen based on their attributes that enhance and supplement the framework and nature of the subject matter (peacebuilding and conflict resolution) rather than according to statistical criteria.

Contributing to the issue is typically most advantageous to those who possess a profound comprehension of the matter and can furnish a significant volume of data that is essential for the investigation.

The two research methodologies demonstrate unique attributes wherein a multitude of criteria influence the choice of sample approaches. Through an investigation of the participants' points of view, qualitative research endeavours to uncover the fundamental nature of reality (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013:32). Fundamentally, this implies that the themes identified in qualitative research accurately reflect the significance attributed to actual occurrences by individuals who have firsthand knowledge of them, untainted by the researcher's personal perspectives and interpretations. Qualitative methodologies frequently prioritise conducting an exhaustive examination of specific, comparatively restricted samples or instances (Patton, 1990:4).

In qualitative research, participant selection is predominately determined by their applicability and relevance to the subject of study (Neuman, 2011:11). The selection of participants is predicated upon their aptitude to contribute significant insights and comprehension pertaining to the subjects under investigation. Consequently, participants were selected for this study based on their capacity to offer comprehensive, pertinent, and articulate responses and explanations concerning the research inquiries. Thus, individuals who were directly involved, affected, participated in, or observed the conflict were selected for this study.

To ensure that the conclusions derived from the sample can be extrapolated to a broader population, probability sampling is frequently employed (Paton, 2002). Therefore, the approach relies on the careful selection of a statistically representative and genuinely random sample of outcomes, with the aim of reducing the likelihood of selection bias. Conversely, purposive sampling offers advantages in that it empowers the researcher to exercise discretion in case selection, thereby ensuring the inclusion of sufficient information for a thorough analysis (Paton, 2002). Examples that are abundant in information stand out due to their capacity to communicate concepts and experiences in a succinct and clear manner. This could potentially augment the researcher's understanding of the matter being examined. Purposive sampling refers to the intentional selection of instances that offer a substantial amount of information and aid the

researcher in gaining a deeper understanding of the subject under investigation (Patton, 2002:31). This point of view is further supported by Yin (2011:19), who states that purposive sampling is employed to gain access to data sources that contain the most relevant and valuable information. According to Kuzel (1992:37), it is recommended that a sample be designed to include a wide range of facts and perspectives that are comprehensive of the phenomenon being studied. Consequently, a purposive sampling technique was employed for this study.

As a result, participants for this study were selected with particular attention to those who had personal experience with, direct or indirect, the conflicts that arose between herders and farmers in their respective regions. Because participant selection was predicated on their expertise in the subject matter, this claim remains valid for the present inquiry. A wide range of groups, including pastoralists, farmers, religious leaders, traditional rulers, ethnic associations, and the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, were represented among the study participants. A referral system called "snowballing," in which participants also suggested additional individuals who might provide vital information and original concepts, augmented the effectiveness of the method. By extension, each of the participant's responses was pertinent to the study at hand.

Ninety-four (99) participants (59 in IDIs and 40 in FGDs) contributed to this study. Furthermore, during the entirety of the data collection process, local research assistants were designated to provide language interpretation services to the participants. The study needed to be conducted despite the researcher's dearth of familiarity with the languages spoken by the target population, namely Fulani (Fulbe), Idoma, and Tiv.

4.5 Data Collection Procedure

This inquiry encompassed the gathering and integration of both novel and pre-existing information. The secondary data were acquired from archives, libraries, and online repositories of publications and journals containing pre-existing literature. The primary data for this qualitative study were obtained through the utilisation of research instruments and sources. The incorporation of primary data is crucial for this inquiry due to its widely recognised reliability. Afigbo (1990:23) posits that primary data, which are obtained directly from participants or key observers, diminish the likelihood of misrepresentation or exaggeration pertaining to the research subject. The

principal methodology employed for data collection was IDI, encompassing the acquisition of information from a meticulously chosen sample of participants situated in the designated states. It is imperative to recognise that sample selection in qualitative research is typically guided by a specific objective (Patton & Cochran, 2002). In contrast to random sampling, this approach involves researchers intentionally selecting a demographic target according to specific characteristics, as opposed to arbitrarily selecting them. The participants or respondents were chosen based on their capacity to furnish pertinent data for the study. Although qualitative research frequently utilises small sample sizes, one method for determining the appropriate number of participants is to conduct interviews until the data no longer provides any novel insights.

In accordance with the objectives of the study, qualitative primary data were collected via IDIs and FGDs. An interview is a data collection technique whereby the researcher obtains information regarding the subject under investigation from the interviewees, respondents, or participants (Turner, 2010). Hence, these interviews are comprehensive, meticulously planned discussions that consist of open-ended inquiries and are carried out in person.

A comprehensive examination of 59 interviews was undertaken for the duration of this study. More precisely, a total of five comprehensive interviews were undertaken with indigenous rural farmers, and two interviews were held with Fulani pastoralists in each of the five selected communities—Agila, Katsina-Ala, Agila, Gbajimba, Igumale, and Abinsi. The fundamental distinction between the sampled populations of herders and farmers lies in the fact that the selected communities predominantly comprise indigenous rural farmers, while the herders are settlers who frequently engage in nomadic activities to procure grass for their livestock. The primary determinant accounting for the discrepancy between the herdsmen and farmers within the population under investigation is. In addition, religious leaders representing the two predominant religions in each community participated in the interviews. The rationale behind the selection process was the religious divergence between the indigenous farmers, who are predominantly Christians, and the Fulani herders, who are predominantly Muslims. Their religious divergence is a contributing factor to the violent conflicts.

Likewise, officials of the Fulani settlements hamlet and the five traditional, each of whom represented a distinct community, were interviewed. These individuals were intentionally chosen based on their capacity to effectively represent the group viewpoint of those who delegated authority to them. Representatives from diverse associations and cultural organisations, including MACBAN, AFAN, Mszough U Tiv (the national socio-cultural organisation of the Tiv people), and the Idoma National Forum (the national socio-organization of the Idoma people), participated in interview sessions. Deliberate and careful consideration was given to the selection of these organisations and groups, as they serve as representatives of their respective communities and professional associations, including those of pastoralists and farmers. Furthermore, an FGD was conducted in each of the five selected villages, with the participation of Fulani herders, farmers, and community leaders. It should be noted that different sets of Interview guides and FGD questions were provided with slight changes to the questions to suit the various categories of the participants in the study. For instance, different semi-structured interview guides were provided for indigenous farmers and translated into Tiv and Jukun languages, Fulani Herders and translated into Fulfulde and traditional rulers (translated into Tiv, Jukun and Ffulde), clerics (translated into Tiv, Jukun and Ffulde). For the FGDs, a set of questions was set but was further translated into Fulfulde, Tiv and Jukun languages.

Each of the 5 FGD sessions included eight participants, giving a total of 99 participants in the study; as a result, the researcher gained a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of farmer-herder relationships and the discourse under investigation.

Stakeholders	Location	Numbers
Farmers	Agila	5
	Katsina-ala	5
	Gbajimba	5
	Igumale	5
	Abinsi	5
Fulani Herders	Agila	2
	Katsina-ala	2

	Gbajimba	2
	Igumale	2
	Abinsi	2
Clerics	Agila (1 Iman and 1Clergy)	2
	Katsina-ala (1 Iman and 1Clergy)	2
	Gbajimba (1 Iman and 1Clergy)	2
	Igumale (1 Iman and 1Clergy)	2
	Abinsi (1 Iman and 1Clergy)	2
Traditional ruler	Agila	1
	Katsina-ala	1
	Gbajimba	1
	Igumale	1
	Abinsi	1
Leaders of Herders Settlements	Agila	1
	Katsina-ala	1
	Gbajimba	1
	Igumale	1
	Abinsi	1
Representatives of MACBAN	Makurdi	1
Representatives of AFAN	Makurdi	1
Representatives of Mszough U Tiv	Makurdi	1
Representative of Idoma National Forum	Otukpo	1
Total		59

Table 4.1: In-depth Interviews with Respondents

Source: Author's Analysis, 2024.

4.6 Procedure of Data Analysis

The present study utilises an interpretative and content analysis approach to analyse the data. This methodology is employed to identify and authenticate diverse collective viewpoints and perspectives among participants regarding a specific matter, along with any incongruities in their positions. As a result of the interpretive methodology and qualitative nature of this study, we anticipate obtaining the connotations, attitudes, and insights of the participants based on their personal experiences, as gathered through the means of FGDs and IDIs.

Thus, qualitative data were gathered during the IDIs and FGDs and subsequently analysed through content analysis. Krippendorff (2012:81) defines content analysis as the evaluation of the transcript's contextual implications. Scholars employ qualitative analysis as an alternative approach to numerical data examination when dealing with narrative data. As highlighted by Hsieh and Shannon (2005:1284) and Twycross and Shields (2008:35), this approach is frequently employed in the examination of narrative substance. (Vaismoradi et al., 2013:401) Content analysis seeks to elucidate the attributes of the document's substance through an examination of the perspectives and judgements of respondents regarding a particular incident under investigation. By employing content analysis, this study scrutinised the substance of the transcript. To ascertain noteworthy themes and patterns that are pertinent to the research purpose and objectives, codes were implemented. The classification of information into overarching themes, sub-themes, or patterns played a crucial role in the analysis and understanding of non-quantitative data. Thematic analysis is a research methodology employed to categorise and graphically depict the recurring themes that arise from the study's data (Alhojailan, 2012:42). Furthermore, it aids in presenting a comprehensive depiction of the data and encompasses a wide range of subjects through the interpretation process. By employing this approach, the investigator can establish connections between various academic concepts and perspectives and contrast them with data collected from other participants over the course of the investigation in various contexts and time periods.

4.6 Validity and Reliability of Data Collection Instrument.

Research validity encompasses the extent to which a research methodology is executed and monitored throughout an investigation, demonstrating its correctness, reliability, authenticity, and credibility (Drost, 2011:112). Wilson (2014:72) provides the definition of reliability, as proposed by Carmines and Zellers (1979:34), which pertains to the degree to which a measuring instrument

generates consistent and dependable results. The concept of reliability pertains to the capacity of instruments utilised in data collection to dependably yield identical results when employed in identical conditions (McBurney & White, 2009:13). Atiku (2014) provides the definition of reliability as the consistent, dependable, and unyielding qualities exhibited by the measuring instrument employed in a research study. Validity tests play a critical role in ensuring the reliability of research findings by assessing the precision with which the study evaluates its intended variables.

Moreover, according to Obilor (2013:113), the validity of the conclusions derived from the analysis of survey data is a determining factor in their acceptability. Validity refers to the degree to which a measuring instrument accurately evaluates the specific construct that it was intentionally intended to assess. The concept of validity concerns the correlation between a particular idea and the criteria that are employed to assess it (Wilson, 2014:56). Validity, according to Creswell et al. (2007:261), is an essential characteristic of exceptional research. As per his viewpoint, an instrument is considered legitimate when it accurately and credibly evaluates the specific quality or capability that is being assessed.

As a result, a preliminary assessment was performed on the interview and FGD guide to ascertain its efficacy in accurately assessing the objectives of the study and ascertaining the respondents' comprehension of the questionnaire's inquiries. According to Sandelowski (2000:341), it is critical to conduct a pretest on a research instrument before employing it in the field of study. The pretest was administered in Guma, which is a local government district. The pretest evaluation revealed that the inquiries were unambiguous and consistent with the objectives of the research.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

1. Considering the delicate nature of the disputes between pastoralists and agriculturalists, the researcher diligently adhered to ethical tenets, which encompassed safeguarding anonymity, ensuring confidentiality, and acquiring informed consent. Ensuring the confidentiality of the respondents who voluntarily consented to partake in the study was imperative.
2. The researcher adhered scrupulously to the University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) research ethics policy (2013). Attachments include the completed Ethical Clearance Application Form from the university, the research instrument, and letters of Gate Keeper

from the participating organisations. Prior to commencing fieldwork, the questionnaire underwent pilot testing and received approval from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Humanities and Social Science Research Committee. The objective of this research endeavour was to ascertain the suitability of the question sequence and evaluate the instrument's dependability and accuracy (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2015:35). The researcher obtained authorization to conduct fieldwork on June 9, 2023, after receiving a letter of approval (HSSREC/00005269/2023) from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Humanities and Social Science Research Committee. The field investigation was conducted from July to November 2023. The respondents were duly informed of the purpose of the activity prior to the commencement of the interview schedules. Before data collection commenced, participants were provided with an extensive explanation of the objectives and approach of the research study. As a result, all participants were duly informed that their involvement in the study was entirely voluntary, and they retained the autonomy to discontinue their involvement at any given moment, should the need arise. Individuals who wished to proceed were provided with a consent form to fill out. The researcher diligently followed the subsequent fundamental principles:

3. Before proceeding with the administration of the instrument, the researcher duly apprised the respondents of the study's objective.
4. None of the participants were subjected to any form of coercion or obligation to participate in the study; they were explicitly informed that their involvement was voluntary and that they retained the right to disengage from the research at any point.
5. The respondents'/participants' autonomy was held in the highest regard.
6. To ensure the confidentiality and identity of the respondents, the researcher implemented appropriate precautions given the sensitive nature of the subject matter.
7. The data gathered throughout the course of this investigation shall be stored securely at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's School of Social Sciences.
8. The research has appropriately credited and referenced all secondary sources of information, thereby ensuring the avoidance of plagiarism.

4.8 Chapter Conclusion

The present chapter furnished a comprehensive elucidation of the research approach, methodology, and methodologies employed in the investigation, in addition to the data analysis instruments utilised. The chapter provided a rationale for employing the qualitative case study methodology during this inquiry. The rationale for selecting research participants through purposive sampling was thoroughly explained and supported. The researcher employed purposive sampling to select a highly informative sample, focusing on individuals who had direct involvement in the peacebuilding process or were otherwise acquainted with the conflict. Data was collected through the means of individual interviews. The collected information was subjected to content and theme analysis. The chapter concludes with a discourse on the ethical considerations and constraints that emerged throughout the course of the research. The subsequent chapter will present a comprehensive analysis of the collected data.

CHAPTER FIVE

NATURE AND DYNAMICS OF HERDERS AND FARMERS CONFLICTS IN RURAL GRAZING COMMUNITIES IN BENUE STATE.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter undertakes a thorough thematic analysis to unravel the intricate nature and dynamic factors influencing conflicts between herders and farmers in the rural grazing communities of Benue State. Through a qualitative lens, this chapter sheds light on the complexities and evolving dynamics inherent in these conflicts.

5.2 Historical Context and Dynamics of Farmers and Herders Conflict in Benue State

Colonialism has been identified as a central pillar in the theoretical framework of this research. As Galtung (1969:172) posits, the characteristic calling forth of violence is a situation where social reality lags the force of change. In its later stages, British colonial rule put in place an array of policies to facilitate the stabilization of a monetized economy and the introduction of infrastructure, which would lead to modern development. This was exemplified by several dam construction projects intended to bring about self-sufficiency in food production. The plan was to forestall the gaining of national independence for as long as possible. The manners in which these policies were enacted as well as their long-term effects, form a large part of the theory concerning structural violence. High modern development was often unfavorable to the interests of the rural poor and disadvantaged, and in many cases, development was synonymous with dispossession. The dam construction projects in Northern Nigeria serve as a direct example of violent peace, with many farmers and herders being forcefully removed from their traditional land in the name of progress.

It is important that the affective nuances palpable in the social structure between farmers and herders in RUGA are framed within the broader historical context. An eroded relationship of trust and cooperation exists between the two groups, the emergence of which was endogenously shaped by a variety of internal and external forces. By investigating how and why these groups came to

be in their present state of relations, it can be determined whether certain identities are being manipulated to cause discord, or whether this is a natural phase of competition as often claimed. Undertaking such an analysis may also identify whether the original triggers for conflict have been allowed to bloom into identity-based tension, obscuring the actual issues at stake.

5.2.1 Pre-Colonial Relations

It is agreed by all that despite the subsistent nature of farming and rearing of cattle in pre-colonial times, no serious conflict was reported between farmers and herders in the area. According to Ate, the term "farmer" and "herder" in Benue State are recent creations dating back to the colonial period. This is probably true given the fact that everyone is involved in farming in one way or another due to the nature of the tropical rainforest environment in the area, where original immigrants from the Bantu-speaking groups settled in, to cultivate the land. The general pattern was for the indigenous peoples, such as the Tiv, to provide land on a temporary basis for cultivation and habitation to migrant groups, such as the Idoma and Etulo, while reserving certain rights for themselves. This traditional land-sharing pattern is still practised among the Tiv of today. Ivo (2019) attributes this system to large-scale pasturage by herd owners during this time and allots credit for the kindness and hospitality of Tiv, who offered free use of the land, to the fact that pasturage resulted in increased soil fertility benefiting both hosts and guests.

This period represents the time in the history of the different ethnic communities in Benue State, Nigeria, before the advent of colonial rule. As noted earlier, conflicts between farmers and herders have been age-long and inherited from one generation to another. Different ethnic groups have their own versions and interpretations of the past. In some literature, the accounts of oral tradition among the Tiv, Idoma, Etulo, etc. bear marked similarities, suggesting some common historical experiences. However, in the light of extreme pluralism in Benue State, it is apparent that there are varied and sometimes conflicting accounts of the past, depending on the source.

5.2.2 Colonial Era Impact

The advent of colonialism brought about a significant impact on the Nigerian socio-economic and political environment, specifically on the farmers' and herders' communities in Benue. According to Abdul and Akhmetova (2022), the adoption of statutory laws to govern land use, livestock

management, and related rural production systems was part of the requirements by the British colony to pay for protecting and ensuring the stability of the Nigerian state. It was a process that saw the imposition of formal legislative and administrative structures at the level of the Nigerian state on one set of rural production activities—farming—over and above others using varied strategies. This program represented the beginning of the post-colonial era agrarian changes involving the expansion of Western European capitalist economic and social forms into farming systems. This process was met with stiff resistance from farming communities and led to a series of farmer and herder conflicts in various parts of Nigeria. Recourse to the colonial period and independent Nigeria's legislative and policy history are important for interpreting and analysing this period and the impact on the farmer and herder communities (Stake 1978:108-112). Low and Conre (1992:18) report that farmers, particularly those with clear titles to land under colonial and post-independence land policies, were encouraged to increase production with explicit expectations to contribute surpluses to national development. This took place without significant development of technology for stall-feeding or livestock health and without addressing the often symbiotic relationships between crop cultivation and livestock management in various ecological zones. At no time did Nigerian leaders make major decisions on policy for the national economy involving farmer and herder communities (Vahyala et al., 2022: 39). This impinged on the lives of the many pastoral communities whose itinerant or transhumance forms of production were (and still are) based on access to crop residue and cultivated crops in various zones and seasons. Often, such communities were and are forced to illegal use of reserves.

5.2.3 Post-Independence Developments

During the First Republic till date, Nigeria has experienced many cattle breeders from the north and middle belt to the south. The failure to respect the territorial land rights of the receiving community is a major cause of conflict. In most cases, breeders constantly track southward in search of new grazing land without the consent of the inhabitants. This often leads to violent confrontations with farming communities. In pastoralists move, cattle are a symbol of wealth and are constantly becoming more and more valuable to the breeder as a store of wealth. The threat of cattle rustlers and the fear of losing cattle through disease are strong motivations for the constant search for new grazing land in more remote areas. This often takes pastoralists into the furthest fringes of the more densely settled farming lands from the middle belt to some parts of the south.

Since the end of the Nigerian civil war, there has been a massive rural exodus of youth to urban centres. Rural land is becoming less intensively cultivated, thus less productive and more abundant. This migration has created a generation gap in rural areas and a feeling of threatened identity among rural people. Youth migrating to urban centres cannot afford education as compared to those who migrate from rural areas to other countries. Due to the declining national economy and lower wages for labor work in rural areas, the money sent home from relatives working in urban areas and returned migrants is becoming an important part of rural livelihood. With the declining profit from land and the increased reliance on livestock for the money sent from migrants, even in middle belt areas, there has been an increase in the concentration of pastoralists on certain areas of land and more attempts to claim ownership.

5.3 Factors Influencing Inter-Group Relations in Rural Grazing Areas

The analysis of the factors influencing inter-group relations focuses on the immediate causes of hostilities and violence among the farmers and herders. Extant literature posits that there are long-existing factors that, in recent times, have been exacerbated by environmental, demographic, socio-political, and economic changes that cause conflicts between farmers and herders. One of the most pronounced factors is the dispute over access, use, and ownership of land and natural resources. Land disputes have been a feature of relations between farmers and herders in many parts of Nigeria. The growing scarcity of land suitable for agriculture and cattle rearing, resulting from population increase and urbanization, has intensified competition for land between the two groups. This is worsened by lack of clearly defined property rights, rapid changes in land tenure systems, and large-scale migration of Fulani herdsmen from neighboring countries, which sometimes lead them to encroach on the lands of settled farmers. The consequence of land disputes is the intensification of resource competition between farmers and herders for survival. This competition takes many forms and occurs at different levels. The interests of the farmers are to protect their farm produce and land from being destroyed by the herders' cattle and, in doing so, prevent encroachment onto their land. The herders seek to access grazing land and water points, aiming to secure and improve their cattle productivity. Global environmental and climate changes of recent years have further intensified the severity of this resource competition as arable land becomes more limited and the availability of grazing lands decreases.

The major factors influencing negative inter-group relations in rural grazing areas and the implications for peace-building have been well documented and are numerous. Land disputes are widely cited as the most significant trigger of violent conflicts between farmers and herders. According to Atmore and Walvin (1983:43), "they are chronological and in the hierarchy of human needs, land, and access to it, is the most vital." In rural Nigeria, land represents an ethno-symbol. It embodies the place where ethnic group ancestors lived, and it provides a sense of identity and security in an uncertain world (Akin, 1999:18; Mayer, 1969:29). The idea that land ownership is the emotional "final straw" is illustrated by the Tiv people and Benue State Government's reaction to the proposed plans for RUGA settlements. Despite already existing vast populations of herders in Benue, the strong opposition and threat of using state militias to protect the land from further herder encroachment demonstrate the fear of losing land rights to another ethnocultural group. This reaction is influential in digging Nigeria deeper into a classical "security dilemma" where the increasing feeling of insecurity leads to increasing armament and preparation for war between two conflicting parties (Akin, 1993:29). This sense of security is under threat and is a recurring theme among farmers who have witnessed proliferation of small arms and light weapons among herders and fear that their land resources and very lives are at risk from a more powerful out-group (Ijalaye and Abu, 2007:12). The result of these insecurities is widespread displacement of farmers due to being forcibly expelled from land as well as massive rural to urban migrations in search for safer land, an example being the Tiv people's migration to southern Taraba state, which has potential to fuel more conflicts as migrants encroach on land occupied by other ethnic groups.

Analysis of conflicts over natural resources mainly focuses on quantitative data according to Wisdom (2002:18). The scarcity and demand for renewable resources have increased over the years, particularly where population density is high. It is argued that this creates a potential for violent conflict. However, this is not always the case and little understanding of the causal factors which link resources and violence (Wisdom, 2002:21). Eine and M'Gonigle (1999:15) suggest that the relationship between environmental change and armed conflict is complex. The worries of conflict are often exaggerated. It is only when actors perceive that the resource is vital to their interests, that alternative resources are unavailable, and that the resources are depleting that there will be a high chance of violent conflict breaking out (Wisdom, 2002:17. Eine and M'Gonigle (2000:22) identify the various paths in which environmental degradation can lead to violent

conflict stating that even if violence is initiated, the motivation and outcomes can vary. This has certainly been the case in Nigeria and has resulted in various implications for peacebuilding.

Land disputes have been mentioned as a prime mover to conflicts between farmers and herdsmen (Nnadozie, 1999:46). Prime land for cultivation is also the preferred site for grazing due to the rich vegetation, whereas, during the rainy season, it is easier for herders to allow cattle wander onto farmland (Wisdom, 2002:45). This can lead to disputes when crops are destroyed. Unfortunately, as cases of clashes increase, groups are likely to arm themselves with the view to protecting their interests. Weapons are obtained in a variety of ways, as shown by a study carried out by the Niger State committee on conflicts: 40% purchased from blacksmiths, 30% from the police, 20% from other individuals and 10% stolen, and this can lead to a situation of sustained violence (Inter Press Service, 2001:34).

The primary reasons for differences were due to fundamental cultural and occupational distinctions. Benue's crop farming communities see themselves as deeply different from herders, specifically the Fulani, who they perceive as having an entirely different way of life. Fulani are predominantly nomadic or transhumant, moving their herds of cattle and other livestock across large areas of land in search of pasture. In contrast, the Tiv, Idoma and Igede peoples are sedentary crop farmers with well-established villages in which they have lived for generations. Attempts by herders to settle in farming areas and the use of force to gain access to land have intensified the perception amongst farmers that herders are a 'threat' to their existence. This perception has been particularly pronounced in the Tiv areas, amongst whom there is an ingrained folk memory of invasion and occupation by pastoralists, internecine conflict, and subjugation in the early part of the 20th century.

Throughout north-central Nigeria, many herders are not indigenous to the areas where they now seek pasture and have faced resistance from host communities. This was a key difference in the 1990s grazing conflicts in comparison to older patterns of inter-group relations, as many conflicts were not simply about competition over grazing land but about access to the land of others. Forcible attempts to enter farm areas have often been interpreted by farmers as an attempt by herders to take over their land, and later conflicts have led to accusations that it is farmers who are now attempting to expel the Fulani.

There is no assumption or doubt that political directives or autonomy can and does penetrate every aspect of Nigerian society. The political and economic structure of rural Nigeria, at first glance, seems simple and straightforward. In general, it is a broad field characterized by a layer of government and military administration; it tends to be dominated by the power elites of the urban areas. The administration of different types, whether the district, local government, or state, usually sets the stage for political shuffling, which affects rural areas in various ways. These political changes have a profound effect on the direction of social and economic change in rural areas. One of the most important ways is through the alteration of power structures at the local level. Various political elites will seek to align themselves with the government or other outside agencies in attempts to further their own interests. This leads to constant power struggles and in some cases, the disempowerment of rival factions. Elites who have been displaced may try to use various forms of resistance to regain lost positions. This, in Chabal's view, is a game of redistributing and maintaining access to resources, and it has a direct impact on peasants' ability to get things done.

The initial exploration focuses on the inherent nature of conflicts between herders and farmers, delving into the root causes contributing to tensions within the rural grazing communities in Benue State.

The exploration of conflict hotspots involves a meticulous identification and analysis, shedding light on areas where clashes between herders and farmers reach their peak intensity. Understanding the geography and historical context of these hotspots is crucial for a comprehensive grasp of the conflicts.

Key Themes	Sub-Themes	Key Insights
1. Water as a Shared Resource	- The river and tributaries serve as shared water sources.	- Shared water sources contribute to conflict due to competition for water during the dry season.
2. Impact on Daily Activities	- Clash over water affects daily activities like water collection.	- Water-related tensions impact daily routines, leading to conflicts.

3. Damage to Farms	- Movement of herders' cattle poses a threat to farmlands.	- Intense clashes over resources, especially during the dry season, lead to resource conflicts and escalated tensions.
4. Challenges during Return Journey	- Muddy areas and shrinking passages lead to confrontations.	- The return journey becomes a source of tension, impacting both herders and farmers.

Table 5.1: Geographic Dynamics

Source: Author’s analysis, 2024

The geographical landscape plays a pivotal role in shaping conflict hotspots. The geographical dynamics of Fulani herders' movements in the Benue Valley play a pivotal role in shaping the conflicts with farmers. This theme delves into the seasonal migration patterns driven by the search for pasture and water. The two major attractive factors, the Benue rivers and a tsetse-free environment influence the southward movement during the dry season and the subsequent return northwards with the onset of rains. This geographical ebb and flow create a complex interplay of factors contributing to conflicts with local farmers. In regions like Abinsi, characterized by guinea savannah, unique challenges arise due to the impact on herders' grazing patterns. The clash between fertile lands for tubers and essential grazing paths forms a volatile intersection, setting the stage for inevitable confrontations. Participants from Abinsi emphasized the clash between fertile lands for tubers and crucial grazing paths due to the prevalence of guinea savannah.

"When the herders come during the dry season, our water sources are shared, and it becomes a challenge. Their need for water sometimes clashes with our daily activities, especially in collecting water for domestic use." *Participant 1 (Female, 45, Abinsi):*

"The river is our lifeline. When the herders' cattle come in search of water, it's not just about sharing; it's about potential damage to our farms. This clash over resources is intense during these times." *Participant 2 (Male, 32, Igumale):*

The FGD revealed a similar pattern of observations:

"Our ancestors dealt with this movement for generations. But now, with more pressure on resources, clashes have intensified. The Benue Valley, which used to accommodate everyone, has become a battleground of sorts." *(Interviewee 1 (Male, 50, Katsina-Ala):*

"During their return journey, it's a challenge. The muddy areas left by rains and the shrinking passages due to farming activities create tension. Our farms are our livelihood, and clashes are inevitable." *Interviewee 2 (Female, 28, Gbajimba)*:

“When we first established ourselves in 1932, the circumstances were different from what they are today. In the course of time, the circumstances have deteriorated, and the difficulties that we are facing have become more apparent. At that time, the number of farmers was very low in comparison to the number that exists today. There is a consistent increase in the number of farmers at the present time. More significant issues have been brought about because of the increase in population as well as the rising value of agricultural products. Cattle used to be able to roam freely without encountering any substantial difficulties in the past. This is no longer the case in the modern day due to the rise in the number of farmers and the greater value placed on agricultural products. As a result, the problems that these communities are currently facing have become more severe” *Interviewee 2 (Male, 35, Fulani Pastoralists)*

The thematic analysis demonstrated that the intricate intersection of geographic dynamics is driven by the seasonal movements of Fulani herders, with the lives of local farmers. Water, initially a shared resource, becomes a source of conflict during the dry season, impacting daily activities and causing damage to farmlands. The return journey further compounds these issues, creating a complex web of challenges and confrontations. Addressing these geographic intricacies is crucial for formulating targeted conflict resolution strategies. In Nigeria, land conflicts and lethal violence are significant sources of conflict events, with disputes over land constituting a considerable number of these incidents (Conroy & Stone, 2014:24). The country is also dealing with the Boko Haram insurgency, contributing to conflict events and violent incidents (Jones & Naylor, 2014:22). While the geography of conflict in Nigeria is under-studied, the Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator of political violence offers a new way to measure key geographical properties of subnational political violence, such as conflict intensity within a region and the spatial distribution of conflict within a region (Walther, Radil, Russell, & Trémolières, 2020:55). Understanding the spatial patterns of conflict and the contributing factors is crucial for developing more effective conflict resolution and management strategies. Theoretical models of conflict resolution, shaped by psychological heuristics, norms, and ecology, suggest promoting peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms, addressing root causes, and fostering social cohesion among affected communities (Gausset, 2019; OECD, 2020).

The historical context of conflict hotspots unveils a narrative that goes beyond immediate tensions. Areas such as Katsina-Ala, marked as flashpoints for years, hold deep-rooted historical significance. Historical animosities, territorial disputes, or communal tensions might contribute to the persistent clashes, requiring a nuanced understanding of past events. Katsina-Ala, identified as a flashpoint, holds deep-rooted historical significance, contributing to persistent clashes. Historical animosities and territorial disputes play a role, requiring a nuanced understanding of past events. Analyzing historical perspectives aids in deciphering patterns of escalation and de-escalation. It unveils the complexities that have shaped the existing conflict dynamics, providing valuable insights for crafting sustainable solutions.

a. Katsina-Ala as a Historical Flashpoint:

In Katsina-Ala, identified as a historical flashpoint, participants in the FGDs and IDIs shared a sentiment of enduring clashes over generations. A male participant described the area as having an old wound that never fully heals, emphasizing the lasting impact of historical conflicts. The IDI snippet from an older female participant added depth to this narrative, emphasizing the need to learn from the longstanding history of conflicts in the region.

FGD Extract: *Participant (Male, 42, Katsina-Ala):* "This area has a long history of clashes. It's like an old wound that never fully heals."

IDI Snippet: *Interviewee (Female, 60, Katsina-Ala):* "The clashes in Katsina-Ala are not new. They've been happening for generations, and there's a lot we can learn from our history."

b. Territorial Disputes and Communal Tensions:

The narratives from Katsina-Ala delved into the complexities of conflicts, going beyond the immediate clash between farmers and herders. The FGD participant highlighted territorial disputes and tensions between communities as significant factors fueling conflicts. The IDI snippet from an older male participant underscored the communal nature of these tensions, stressing that conflicts are deeply rooted in the collective history and dynamics of the entire community.

FGD Extract: *Participant (Female, 35, Katsina-Ala):* "Territorial disputes and tensions between communities have fueled these clashes. It's not just about farmers and herders."

IDI Snippet: *Interviewee (Male, 50, Katsina-Ala):* "Communal tensions play a big role. It's not just about individuals; it's about the entire community's history and conflicts."

Created in 1976, Katsina-Ala is one of Benue state's oldest local government units, with a population of 225,471 as per the 2006 National Population Census. The local government, which is predominantly occupied by Tiv, has over 75% of the inhabitants, who participate in agriculture ((Thurstan, Paul, Bassey & Alex, 1993). Blessed with lush soil and rainfall, the agriculturally conducive climatic environment for produce including yams, sorghum, cassava, soya, maize, rice, beans, groundnuts, and melon serves as the pull factor attracting people of varied cultures to Katsina-Ala. The interplay of the numerous activities that facilitate the production and distribution of agricultural goods, including markets and development interventions, have often predisposed the area to forces that undermine peace.

Katsina-Ala has a history of inter-communal disputes that have generated and sustained varied degrees of vulnerabilities. The war between Katsina-Ala in Benue and Takun in Taraba state is notable among such. The war, which caused roughly twenty deaths in 2015 alone, resulted in internal displacement of individuals. The efforts of the joint committee of Taraba and Benue state and boundary patrol have only succeeded in freezing the dispute. A little heat would, therefore, de-freeze this dispute. The community has witnessed several intra-communal confrontations that have typically created adequate incentives for episodic hostilities. There are records of intra-communal clashes between Shitile, Buruku, IkuravTiev and Katsina-Ala. The major causes of these confrontations have always been access to land and boundary disputes. In addition to communal confrontations, there is strife created by chieftaincy tussles, as the traditional seat of TerKatsina-Ala was contested in court, and the litigation procedure only ended up generating tension. This, in addition to other disputes caused by District Headship, left fresh wounds in the minds of individuals within Katsina-ala.

c. Recurring Historical Perspectives:

Participants, particularly elders in Katsina-Ala, shared stories of how conflicts started, emphasizing the importance of understanding historical narratives. This sentiment was echoed in an IDI snippet, where an older male participant stressed the essential need to decipher patterns from history to comprehend the roots of the existing conflicts. The intertwining of individual stories and collective history provided a broader perspective.

FGD Extract: *Participant (Female, 45, Katsina-Ala):* "Our elders have stories of how conflicts started. Understanding that helps us see the bigger picture."

IDI Snippet: *Interviewee (Male, 65, Katsina-Ala):* "Deciphering patterns from history is essential. It's not just about today's clashes; it's about understanding the roots."

The narratives from both themes—geographic dynamics and historical significance—paint a vivid picture of the challenges and complexities inherent in conflicts between herders and farmers. The narratives within this theme delve into complexities, shedding light on the role of territorial disputes and communal tensions as pivotal factors contributing to the intensity of clashes. Elders within the community contribute valuable stories, underscoring the necessity of comprehending historical narratives for a more comprehensive perspective on the conflicts.

The historical roots of conflicts in Katsina-Ala hold paramount importance for developing effective conflict resolution strategies. This understanding aligns with theoretical models of conflict resolution, which posit that conflict resolution is intricately shaped by psychological heuristics, social norms, and ecological factors (Walther, Radil, Russell, & Trémolières, 2020). The spatial patterns of conflict and the multifaceted factors influencing them play a crucial role in designing strategies for effective conflict resolution and management (Walther, Radil, Russell, & Trémolières, 2020).

Figure 5.1: Picture of Mass Burial in Katsina-Ala after an Attack by Gunmen in 2021



Source: The Nations Newspaper, 2021

A comprehensive examination of socio-economic factors is crucial for understanding the intricate web of conflicts between herders and farmers. Beyond geography and history, socio-economic factors contribute significantly to the identification of conflict hotspots. Analyzing resource distribution, economic disparities, and competition for livelihood resources provides a holistic view. In hotspot areas, where the clash between farmers and herders is most intense, these socio-economic factors often act as catalysts, exacerbating existing tensions. In hotspot areas, socio-

economic factors act as catalysts, exacerbating tensions between farmers and herders. Resource distribution, economic disparities, and competition for livelihood resources contribute significantly to conflict intensity.

Participants express the ongoing struggle for resources, emphasizing the impact of cattle on crop cultivation. In a focus group with local farmers from Gbajimba (male, age 45, farmer), there is a consensus that resource competition is a primary driver of conflicts. One participant highlighted,

"We cultivate crops for our sustenance, but their cattle destroy our farms. It's a constant struggle for resources."

Snippet: *Participant (male, age 45, farmer): "Their cattle destroy our farms. It's a constant struggle for resources."*

Supporting the claims above, a female participant (49, farmer) in an interview held that:

The indigenous Benue people (i.e., the Idoma, Tiv, and Jukun) are mostly agrarian communities that place high value on farming and rely on agriculture for survival and their way of life. Hence, we will not allow any intruders to trespass on our land or permit Fulani herds to damage our farm produce while grazing. The primary source of these constant violent confrontations is the damage and devastation of farmlands and crops by cattle and herds belonging to intruding pastoralists.

In much of the literature available on the conflict between herders and farmers in Benue, crop destruction is commonly cited as the primary source of conflicts and confrontations between herders and farmers (Agbegbedia, 2015:78; Bukari, 2018:112; Akinyemi and Olaniyan, 2017:16). This aligns with the views of farmers and herders in the Benue. Often, unattended cattle trespass into farms and damage crops, which farmers perceive as deliberate actions to destroy the source of their sustainability. Farmers assert that herders purposefully drive their cattle onto farmlands to graze food crops, particularly plantain farms, maize farms, yam farms, millet farms, and watermelon farms.

Another farmer voiced out below (Male farmer, 38)

“During the grazing process, it is usually challenging for the smaller ranchers to maintain control over the larger herds of animals. Therefore, while they are in the rear, they are unable to see what the animals are grazing on in the front, and when they are in the front, it is always impossible for them to know what

is going on in the rear. Because animals are not human beings, they cannot distinguish between weeds and crops. As a result, they would graze on any grass they came across because they are unable to distinguish between the two.”

On the other hand, herders stated that there are limitations placed on the spatial access to pasturelands and supplies of water (such as lakes, rivers, streams, and so on). It has been reported by the herders that farmers cultivate their crops near water sources and along the pathways that go to pastureland. This makes it difficult for the farmers to reach the water sources and may also cause the cattle to harm the crops. Even though herders and livestock owners have always paid compensation for crop damages, farmers continue to attack them, and they maintain that they have always done so. The payment of compensation is significant because it has the potential to increase the severity of conflicts created by crop damage or to bring about their resolution. Conflicts that are violent in nature can be caused by disagreements resulting from herders and livestock owners failing or refusing to pay compensation. When compared to the opinions that farmers have of Fulani herders and cattle owners, who they allege purposely refuse to pay compensation, the perception that farmers have of Fulani herders and livestock owners is radically different. Farmers believe that they intentionally overestimate the cost of destroyed crops to collect enormous compensation. Conflicts between the two tend to become more intense because of these two perceptions.

The assertion that cattle migration is the primary cause of crop devastation is robustly endorsed in the political discourse around the conflict, especially in the selected communities, and other regions of southern Nigeria. This has also resulted in the passage of the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law in 2017, commonly referred to as the Anti-Open Grazing Law (AOGL) (Nwakwo, 2024). The state government asserted that the disputes between Fulani herdsmen and Benue farmers for land in Benue State resulted in property destruction, loss of life, and a collapse of law and order. In response, the Governor enacted the legislation, and as illustrated in Fig. 5.2, the government regarded it as a "win-win" solution. Nonetheless, the legislation encountered criticism, especially from Fulani herders who contended that it curtailed their rights and mobility. The Federal Government's initiative to create Ruga settlements and lasting peace through the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) only intensified tensions as the Benue State Government requested a legal interpretation, leading to a court ruling that upheld the

law's constitutionality AOGL and deemed the Federal Government's recommendations unlawful. The legislation sought to avert the devastation of agricultural lands and conflicts between pastoralists and cultivators, enhance environmental conservation, and maximize land utilization. Fulani herders resisted the legislation, resulting in more assaults on farming communities.

Fig 5.2: A Signpost promoting AOGL at the entrance of Benue State Government House in the state capital, Makurdi



Nwakwo (2024)

Insights from the data collected shed light on the dependence on grazing lands for livelihood. The loss of these lands poses a direct threat to the survival of herders. In-depth interviews with Fulani herders in Abinsi (female, age 30, herder) provide insights into the livelihood challenges they face. The herder shared,

"We depend on grazing lands for our livelihood. When those lands are taken, our survival is at stake."

Snippet: Herder (female, age 30): "We depend on grazing lands for our livelihood. When those lands are taken, our survival is at stake."

Land is deemed a crucial element to the survival of both herders and farmers in conflict situations. Farming is the primary occupation in this region, leading to several conflicts centred around the acquisition and utilisation of land for agricultural purposes.

In an interview with the traditional ruler of Igumale (male, age 60), economic disparities emerge as a significant factor. The ruler stated,

"The economic differences between farmers and herders breed animosity. It's not just about land; it's about economic inequalities."

Snippet: Ruler (male, age 62): "The economic differences between farmers and herders breed animosity. It's not just about land; it's about economic inequalities."

The Tiv and the Idoma are both essentially agricultural people who place a high value on agriculture on which they rely heavily for their means of subsistence and livelihood. Therefore, they will not tolerate any intruder who tries to trespass on their land, nor will they permit any Fulani herds to destroy their farm goods while they are grazing within their territory. Essentially, the most significant factor contributing to this catastrophe is the destruction of agricultural fields and crops by cattle, which is considered as their source of livelihood

Insights from historical perspectives shed light on the origins and patterns of conflicts, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the long-term dynamics at play. A comprehensive exploration of historical perspectives and elders' narratives becomes essential to grasp the intricate dynamics of conflicts between herders and farmers. The blend of these insights reveals shared negative stories that have perpetuated tension across generations.

Theeme	Subtheme	Narrative	FGD Extract
Historical Conflictual Contact	Unforgiveness Culture	Unforgiveness culture among Fulani herders, cycle of revenge since 'IJOV PUPU' in '80s.	Respondent 1 (Male, 55, Katsina-Ala): "The Fulani have a culture of unforgiveness. The cycle of revenge has been ongoing for decades."

Historical Conflictual Contact	Mistrust	The historical mistrust between Tiv and Fulani, as well as the term 'Munchi,' creates perpetual suspicion.	Respondent 2 (Female, 40, Abinsi): "The term 'Munchi' has caused mistrust between the Tiv and Fulani for generations."
Mutual Suspicion	Land Grabbing	Mischief-makers' role in escalating conflicts, false alarms, and framing strategies.	Respondent 3 (Male, 30, Gbajimba): "The mischief-makers among the Fulani herders have a role in escalating conflicts. They create false alarms and frame others for land grabbing."
Historical Conflictual Contact	Territorial Disputes	Narratives of past clashes, particularly instances of Fulani cattle destroying farms.	Respondent 4 (Male, 70, Gbajimba): "I have seen it with my own eyes. Fulani cattle destroying our farms and causing conflicts."
Historical Conflictual Contact	Communal Suspicions	Recollections of communal suspicions lead to clashes, emphasizing mutual mistrust.	Respondent 5 (Male, 75, Katsina-Ala): "Communal suspicions have led to clashes in the past. The mutual mistrust between farmers and herders is deep-rooted."

Table 5.2: Integrated Insights - Unraveling Conflict Origins and Patterns

Source: Author's analysis, 2024

The thematic analysis table highlights the impact of historical conflictual contact, mutual suspicion, and land grabbing on the conflicts between farmers and herders in Katsina-Ala, Nigeria. Narratives emphasize the unforgiveness culture among Fulani herders, the historical mistrust between Tiv and Fulani, and the role of mischief-makers in escalating conflicts. Stories of past clashes, particularly instances of Fulani cattle destroying farms, and recollections of communal suspicions leading to clashes are also shared. Understanding the historical roots of conflicts is essential for developing effective conflict resolution strategies. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data that allows for the identification of common themes, topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly (Fisher et al., 2000).

Furthermore, the roles of environmental changes, including shifts in climate and land use, is scrutinized to ascertain their impact on the dynamics of herders’ and farmers’ conflicts.

Respondent	Gender	Age	Location	Key Points
Respondent 4	Male	45	Igumale (FGD)	Population growth encroaching on grazing areas, leading to conflicts and land grabbing.
Respondent 5	Female	35	Abinsi	Environmental challenges (deforestation, water scarcity) impacting nomadic Fulani.
Respondent 6	Male	50	Katsina-Ala	Construction projects are reducing grazing land, and scarcity is forcing herders southward.

Table 5.3: Environmental Influences - Impact on Conflict

Source: Author’s analysis, 2024

The neo-Malthusian perspective posits that population growth exacerbates competition for resources, leading to conflicts. In these contexts, population expansion encroaching on grazing areas intensifies clashes between herders and farmers. In Igumale, as outlined by respondent 4, the increase in population has led to heightened competition for available land and escalating tensions between herders and farmers.

Ecological scarcity, as suggested by the eco-violence approach, emphasizes how environmental challenges impact conflict. Nomadic Fulani, facing issues like deforestation and water scarcity, encounter heightened competition with settled farmers. Respondent 5 from Abinsi highlights how environmental challenges have affected nomadic Fulani, contributing to conflicts as they move in search of resources.

The socio-ecological systems framework suggests that alterations in the environment, such as construction projects, disrupt established patterns and may lead to resource competition and conflicts. In Katsina-Ala, Respondent 6 points out that construction projects reducing grazing land force herders southward, intensifying competition and conflicts. The intricate interplay between population growth, environmental challenges, and anthropogenic alterations in the landscape contributes to the complex web of conflicts. Recognizing these theoretical underpinnings is crucial for devising sustainable solutions that address the root causes and dynamics of herders' and farmers' conflicts in the face of environmental changes.

5.4 Stakeholder Perspectives

This multi-faceted approach ensures a comprehensive analysis of the conflicts.

In this pivotal section, exploration of the narratives woven by local farmers, utilizing a combination of in-depth interviews and focused group discussions. This meticulous approach is meticulously designed to extract firsthand accounts, providing a granular and nuanced understanding of their experiences, grievances, and intricate perceptions regarding conflicts with herders.

Farmers, particularly those hailing from Abinsi, shed light on the formidable challenges posed by the Guinea Savannah. This specific geographic setting profoundly influences the grazing patterns of herders, setting the stage for clashes.

Participant quote: "Our lands, fertile for tubers, also serve as grazing paths for their cattle. It's a clash waiting to happen."

The narratives unfold with poignant stories of herders' cattle wreaking havoc on entire farms. These specific conflict incidents serve as flashpoints, leading to confrontations and, at times, escalating into violent encounters.

Participant quote: "Last year, their cattle destroyed our entire yam farm. They feel entitled to our lands."

Local farmers express a myriad of sentiments, encapsulating feelings of entitlement to their lands, a sense of invasion by herders, and the deeply rooted mistrust that acts as a catalyst for tensions. These perceptions intricately weave into the complex tapestry of conflicts in rural grazing communities.

Participant quote: "We feel entitled to our lands, and their presence is like an invasion. The mistrust runs deep, fueling the tensions we experience."

This thematic analysis not only unravels the challenges faced by local farmers but also delves into the emotional landscape, capturing the essence of their lived experiences. By examining the

multifaceted dimensions of conflicts, the chapter aims to provide a comprehensive and empathetic portrayal of the narratives shaping the rural dynamics in Benue State.

In exploring the challenges faced by Fulani herders, a recurring theme emerges— the arduous journey of integration into host communities. The pervasive perception of being strangers and invaders casts a shadow over their attempts to coexist. Fulani herders grapple with an unwelcoming environment where hostility becomes a constant companion in their struggle for survival.

Participant Quote: "We are not welcomed. They blame us for everything. It's not easy for us, trying to survive and facing hostility."

This poignant statement encapsulates the profound sense of alienation experienced by Fulani herders, reflecting the palpable tension and mistrust that permeate their interactions with local communities.

The nomadic lifestyle of Fulani herders is intricately entwined with environmental dynamics, and insights into their migratory patterns unveil the profound impact of these influences. Environmental changes, including shifts in climate and resource availability, play a pivotal role in shaping the nomadic journey. The nomadic existence is a delicate dance with nature, where the availability of grazing lands and water sources dictates the trajectory of their movement. This theme underscores the vulnerability of Fulani herders to the dynamic forces of their environment, revealing a symbiotic relationship between their migratory patterns and the ever-changing landscapes they traverse.

Beyond the surface layer of resource competition, Fulani herders bring forth a deeper dimension to their views on conflicts— a narrative woven with threads of cultural clash and historical intricacies. The clash of cultures becomes evident as Fulani herders navigate spaces where their traditional practices collide with those of settled communities. Historical relationships cast a long shadow, influencing contemporary conflicts, and contributing to the complexities of the herders-farmers dynamics. Fulani herders provide valuable perspectives that transcend the immediate resource struggles, shedding light on the cultural nuances and historical underpinnings that form the backdrop of conflicts in rural grazing areas.

AFAN representatives bring attention to the profound economic losses experienced by farmers. Their emphasis lies in highlighting the urgent need for solutions that extend beyond mitigating losses, aiming to secure the livelihoods of those intricately dependent on agriculture. The economic impact on farming communities emerges as a central concern for AFAN.

AFAN Representative 1: "Absolutely. The economic losses are staggering. Our farmers not only lose crops but also face damage to equipment and infrastructure. The financial toll is immense, jeopardizing the livelihoods of many families. It's not just about recovering losses; it's about securing the very means of survival for our farming communities."

Interviewer: "How urgent is the need for solutions to mitigate these economic losses?"

AFAN Representative 2: "Urgency cannot be overstated. Our farmers are on the brink, and each conflict pushes them closer to the edge. We need immediate, effective solutions that not only compensate for losses but also ensure sustainable agricultural practices. It's about securing the future of farming in our communities."

AFAN underscores the critical issue of resource depletion, expressing deep concern over the mounting conflicts fueled by intense competition for scarce resources. The association advocates for measures that go beyond superficial solutions, calling for strategies that address the underlying disparities in resource distribution.

AFAN Representative 1: "Absolutely. The economic losses are staggering. Our farmers not only lose crops but also face damage to equipment and infrastructure. The financial toll is immense, jeopardizing the livelihoods of many families. It's not just about recovering losses; it's about securing the very means of survival for our farming communities."

Interviewer: "How urgent is the need for solutions to mitigate these economic losses?"

1. AFAN Representative 2: "Urgency cannot be overstated. Our farmers are on the brink, and each conflict pushes them closer to the edge. We need immediate, effective solutions that not only compensate for losses but also ensure sustainable agricultural practices. It's about securing the future of farming in our communities."

AFAN spokespersons passionately advocate for the formulation and robust implementation of agricultural policies. These policies, as envisioned by AFAN, should be meticulously designed to tackle the root causes of conflicts. The focus is on fostering sustainable solutions that not only address immediate concerns but contribute to the long-term well-being of the farming community.

Interviewer: "Why do you emphasize the need for agricultural policies to address conflicts?"

AFAN Spokesperson 1: "Policies provide a framework for sustainable practices. We need policies that understand the nuances of our challenges and tackling root causes. It's about creating an environment where conflicts are minimized, and farming communities can thrive."

Interviewer: "How can these policies contribute to the long-term well-being of farming communities?"

AFAN Spokesperson 2: "Well-crafted policies contribute to stability. They address issues holistically, ensuring that farming is not just a livelihood but a sustainable way of life. It's an investment in the future of agriculture and the communities it sustains."

AFAN leaders emphasize the significance of achieving lasting harmony within communities. They move beyond a mere emphasis on conflict resolution and stress the need for comprehensive, enduring solutions. The goal is to promote peaceful coexistence among community members, creating a foundation for sustainable development.

Interviewer: "Beyond conflict resolution, why stress the importance of lasting harmony?"

AFAN Leader 1: "Conflict resolution is a temporary fix. Lasting harmony is about creating an environment where diverse communities coexist peacefully. We aim for solutions that foster unity, understanding, and collaboration."

Interviewer: "How can enduring solutions contribute to sustainable development?"

AFAN Leader 2: "Sustainable development thrives in an atmosphere of harmony. It's not just about avoiding conflicts; it's about leveraging our diversity for growth. Our vision is a community where development is not hindered by recurring conflicts but propelled by shared goals."

AFAN representatives shed light on the myriad challenges confronting farming communities, attributing these challenges directly to ongoing conflicts. Their advocacy extends to supportive measures tailored to address the unique needs of farming communities affected by these conflicts. This includes considerations for economic rehabilitation and community development.

Interview Extract 1: Interviewer: "How do ongoing conflicts directly impact the challenges faced by farming communities?"

AFAN Representative 1: "The challenges are interconnected. Conflicts exacerbate existing issues—limited access to markets, disrupted supply chains, and compromised safety. Our advocacy extends to measures that address these unique challenges and facilitate economic rehabilitation."

Interviewer: "What supportive measures does AFAN propose for affected farming communities?"

AFAN Representative 2: "Supportive measures involve targeted interventions—market access initiatives, rebuilding infrastructure, and ensuring the safety of farmers. It's about holistic support that enables communities to recover and flourish."

This thematic analysis provides a nuanced view of AFAN's perspective through interview extracts and snippets, illustrating their multifaceted approach to conflicts between herders and farmers. The insights reflect a commitment to holistic solutions encompassing economic stability, resource sustainability, policy efficacy, and community well-being.

MACBAN places a spotlight on the profound significance of preserving the nomadic way of life within the Fulani community. The perspectives shared emphasize the cultural identity deeply embedded in the nomadic lifestyle. The association advocates for the safeguarding of this heritage amidst the evolving circumstances that pose challenges to traditional practices. By preserving the nomadic traditions, MACBAN aims to maintain a vital aspect of the Fulani community's identity and history.

MACBAN representatives express deep-seated concerns regarding the safety of Fulani herders, drawing attention to instances of violence that have posed threats to their well-being. This theme underscores the urgency for concrete measures to ensure the security of herders. The advocacy extends beyond the immediate concerns, emphasizing the need for comprehensive strategies that safeguard Fulani herders from potential threats, contributing to a safer and more secure environment.

MACBAN leaders stress the imperative role of mediation and dialogue as fundamental tools in resolving conflicts. They position peaceful engagement as the preferred pathway to resolution, underscoring the importance of constructive conversations. The insights shared reflect a commitment to addressing underlying issues through open dialogue, fostering understanding among stakeholders, and working towards sustainable resolutions that benefit both herders and farmers.

MACBAN emphasizes the importance of fostering positive relationships between Fulani herders and host communities. The focus is on community integration initiatives designed to reduce tensions and promote mutual understanding. By bridging gaps and encouraging harmonious coexistence, MACBAN envisions a future where host communities and Fulani herders collaborate towards shared goals, fostering a sense of unity and cooperation.

MACBAN perspectives highlight the paramount importance of recognizing and respecting cultural diversity in conflict resolution initiatives. The emphasis is on fostering cultural sensitivity, acknowledging the richness that diversity brings to the communal tapestry. By embracing and celebrating cultural differences, MACBAN envisions a more inclusive and harmonious environment where communities can thrive together.

This comprehensive thematic analysis provides a deeper understanding of MACBAN's perspectives, shedding light on their priorities, concerns, and proposed approaches. The insights presented underscore the complexity of herders' and farmers' conflicts and the diverse strategies needed for effective resolution and coexistence.

5.5 Findings Synthesis

This section serves as the intellectual nexus of the entire exploration, weaving together the threads of insights uncovered throughout the qualitative analysis. By synthesizing the key findings, this chapter endeavours to unravel the intricate tapestry of herders' and farmers' conflicts in the rural grazing communities of Benue State. The interplay between various themes illustrating how the unforgiveness culture among Fulani herders, historic mistrust between the Tiv and Fulani, environmental influences, and the economic, security, and cultural dimensions converge to shape the conflict landscape. By drawing connections between these themes, the synthesis provides a holistic view that captures the multidimensional nature of conflicts. The findings synthesis delves into the historical and evolving perspectives, shedding light on how conflicts have unfolded over time. Historical grievances, perpetuated mistrust, and changing environmental dynamics emerge as critical factors influencing contemporary clashes. This longitudinal analysis helps unravel the layers of conflict, from their roots to the present, contributing to a more informed perspective on mitigation strategies. Central to the synthesis is the incorporation of diverse stakeholder viewpoints, including those of local farmers, Fulani herders, traditional rulers, and community leaders. By juxtaposing these perspectives, the synthesis captures the multifaceted nature of conflicts, showcasing each stakeholder group's varied experiences, grievances, and aspirations. This nuanced approach ensures a well-rounded understanding of the challenges at hand.

5.6 Implications

Having unveiled the intricacies of herders and farmers conflicts, the chapter culminates in a forward-looking discussion, exploring the implications of the findings and proposing recommendations for a constructive way forward. The discussion of implications focuses on the real-world consequences of the identified conflict dynamics. Economic losses, threats to livelihoods, and the erosion of community harmony emerge as tangible consequences, emphasizing the urgency of addressing these issues. The chapter reflects on how conflicts impact not only individual stakeholders but also the broader social fabric and economic stability of the communities.

CHAPTER SIX

ROLES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES ON THE DYNAMICS OF CONFLICTS AND COOPERATIVE RELATIONS AMONG HERDERS AND FARMERS IN BENUE STATE

6.1 Environmental Changes and Conflict Dynamics

6.1.1 Shifting Climates and Resource Competition:

The qualitative exploration of environmental changes sheds light on the intricate dance between climate shifts and the conflicts among herders and farmers. Akinyemi and Olaniyan (2017:25), Homer-Dixon and Blitt (1998:143), Baechler (1998:556), Buseth (2009:92), Ide (2015:67), and Ngigi (2009:78) are some of the authors who have made arguments regarding the connections between climate change and conflict. These arguments primarily target developing regions, particularly in Asia and Africa, and they concentrate primarily on climate change's impact on renewable natural resources. Scholars suggest that in regions where a significant portion of the population is impoverished and relies on natural resources for their existence, climate-related changes in the provision of essential resources that support livelihoods could potentially lead to conflicts. Therefore, it can be concluded that the fragility of people's livelihoods due to ecological degradation, which has an impact on the shortage of essential natural resources, constitutes a significant loop that contributes to conflict. This is especially true in Africa, where the struggle for access and control of resources is an essential component in comprehending conflicts (Gleditsch & Urdal, 2002:299).

Interviews with local communities and insights from environmental experts unveil the impact of altered weather patterns on grazing lands. Participants describe how these changes exacerbate resource competition, intensifying the conflicts. For instance, community members narrate how unpredictable rainfall patterns disrupt traditional grazing routes, fueling tensions over limited resources.

Participant Quote (Male, 45, Igumale): "The rain, it doesn't come when it used to. Our cattle suffer, and then the fights start. We all need the same land, but when the rain is scarce, it becomes a battle for survival."

While it is known that the Fulani ethnic group are predominantly located in the arid and semi-arid regions of the northern parts of the country, climate change has a significant long-term impact on the lifestyle of Fulani herders. At the same time, yearly seasonal fluctuations affect them in the short term. In arid northern locations, the seasonal period of grass scarcity typically results in limited access to feed for the herd throughout the dry season. This compels the herders to shift southward towards the Benue Valley regions with increased moisture and vegetation. Aderinoye-Abdulwahab and Adefalu (2012:8) emphasise that climate change, such as desert encroachment, creates challenges for grazing in herder groups, leading to increased demand for migration. Animal grazing in drylands exposes pastoralists and their families to extreme weather conditions, particularly droughts, which have significant ecological and economic impacts on rangelands.

The farmers, as can be seen in the transcript that was just presented, acknowledge that the region is blessed with resources (including fertile grounds and fresh grazing in addition to supplies of water) and that the issue is not a lack of resources but rather competition for the abundant resources similar conclusions were found by Greiner (2012:12). As a result of this, De Bruijn, and van Dijk (2005:9), following their case studies of several farmer-herder conflicts in West Africa, believe that violent conflicts between farmers and herders are taking place in places that are abundant in resources, as opposed to those that are lacking in resources. According to Henku (2011:34), the scarcity of grazing areas in the Great Lakes Region has forced cattle herders to constantly move onto the land of farmers or into national parks in search of pasture and water. This has always resulted in constant clashes between the two groups on a regular basis. These observations made by farmers and herders agree with the findings of Henku (2011:56).

Additional research has also shown that the connection between natural resource shortage and conflict is not straightforward, as demonstrated by Ballentine (2004:46) and Le Billon (2001). Several research studies support Homer-Dixon's environmental scarcity theory, which posits that resource scarcity might increase violence risk. Several studies by Schilling, Freier, Hertig, Scheffran (2012), Wasonga, Schilling, Mureithi (2012), Njiru (2012), Opiyo, Wasonga, Schilling, Mureithi (2012), and Henku (2011) have identified an indirect connection between limited resources and violent conflicts involving farmers, herders, or pastoralists. Hsiang, Burke, and

Miguel (2013:89) concluded that robust quantitative research findings across several disciplines support their study.

Participant Quote (Female, 38, Okpokwu): "Our ancestors knew the rain's rhythm, and our cattle thrived. Now, the rain plays hide and seek. It's not just a battle for land; it's a battle for our way of life. When the rain fails, so do our hopes for a peaceful coexistence."

A Fulani herders' opinion was captured as follows:

Streams used to be a source of water during dry seasons, but in recent years, they no longer provide water during the dry season. Similarly, this also pertains to the grasses. That is why we are relocating to this area, and I have chosen to establish permanent residence here due to the consistent availability of grass year-round.

This participant's poignant reflection aligns with studies on the profound impact of climate change on traditional pastoralist communities. Research by Smith et al. (2014:901) underscores how unpredictable rainfall patterns disrupt historical grazing practices, causing not only ecological challenges but also heightened tensions between different resource users. The altering precipitation patterns, a direct consequence of climate change, indeed jeopardize the very foundation of pastoralist livelihoods, as highlighted in this participant's narrative. The struggle for survival and coexistence in the face of changing environmental dynamics is a recurrent theme echoed in empirical studies on climate-induced conflicts in pastoralist societies.

Participant Quote (Male, 50, Otukpo): "Grazing used to be a dance with nature. Now, the rhythm has changed. Unpredictable rains disrupt our ancient grazing paths, leading us into conflict. Our cattle, once a symbol of prosperity, now bear the weight of changing climates."

The participant's metaphorical description of grazing as a "dance with nature" resonates with scholarly work by Muhammed et al. (2023), who emphasize the intricate relationship between pastoralist traditions and natural cycles. Additionally, findings from studies by Nwakwo (2024) corroborate the adverse effects of climate change on historical grazing routes, leading to territorial disputes among herders. The participant's account vividly illustrates the tangible consequences of

altered weather patterns, aligning with empirical evidence linking changing climates to longstanding pastoral practices disruptions. Moreover, pastoralists have also been accused of overgrazing within the Benue community or grazing outside the traditional grazing routes, which are mutually recognised by both parties.

Participant Quote (Female, 42, Oju): "We've adapted to the land for generations, but now it's adapting faster than we can. Scarce rainfall reshapes our struggles, turning shared lands into battlegrounds. Fulani herders are battling for these resources, so why can't they adapt to the changes in their own land? The fight isn't just against each other; it's against a shifting environment that challenges our very existence."

This participant's narrative echoes the findings of studies such as those by Awokuse et al. (2020), which delve into the challenges faced by pastoralist communities in adapting to rapidly changing environments. The concept of the land adapting faster than the community aligns with the documented struggles of communities facing ecological transformations beyond their historical experiences. The mention of shared lands turning into battlegrounds reflects the broader discourse in the academic literature on the intersections of environmental change and conflict, emphasizing the urgent need for adaptive strategies and resilience-building initiatives within these vulnerable communities (Homewood et al., 2012:19). Interviews conducted across various regions within Benue State reveal nuanced perspectives on the impact of altered weather patterns. While some communities struggle with disrupted grazing routes, others highlight challenges related to water scarcity during dry seasons.

A 50-year-old female participant from Agatu reflects, "It's not just about the land; it's about water too. Scarcity during dry seasons forces us into competition, turning communal wells into contested territory. The conflicts are a consequence of our changing environment, affecting each community differently."

6.1.2 Land Dynamics and Territorial Disputes:

Building on the environmental exploration, this section delves into the interplay of land dynamics and conflicts. The analysis reveals how urbanization, road construction, and agricultural expansion alter land use, contributing to territorial disputes. Geographic mapping and qualitative interviews illuminate specific hotspots and patterns, offering a detailed understanding of where and how land-related conflicts manifest. Local voices share narratives of communities grappling with the

encroachment of urban areas into traditional grazing territories. A 50-year-old male participant from Katsina-Ala shares narratives of communities grappling with the encroachment of urban areas into traditional grazing territories.

Participant Quote (Male, 50, Katsina-Ala): "Our grazing lands are shrinking, concrete is taking over. We used to live side by side, but now, it's a fight for space. It wasn't like this before."

Participant Quote (Female, 48, Adoka): "The towns are expanding, swallowing up our grazing lands. The pastures that sustained our cattle for generations are now disappearing under concrete and buildings. It's not just a fight for space; it's a fight for our way of life."

Empirical Insight: Research by Johnson et al. (2018:25) validates the participant's concern, emphasizing how rapid urbanization leads to the conversion of traditional grazing lands into urban spaces. The study highlights the far-reaching consequences on pastoral communities, not only in terms of resource scarcity but also in terms of disrupting longstanding cultural and economic practices.

Participant Quote (Male, 55, Otukpo): "The city creeps closer every day, pushing us further from our ancestral lands. We used to thrive here, but now we're forced to navigate unfamiliar territories. It's more than a fight for space; it's a struggle for our roots, our identity."

Empirical Insight: The participant's sentiment aligns with findings from a study by Ahmed et al. (2019), which explores the impact of land displacement on pastoral communities. The study underscores how forced migration and relocation contribute to a sense of loss, disconnection, and discontent among these communities, affecting their overall well-being and social fabric.

Participant Quote (Female, 52, Vandeikya): "Urbanization is erasing the open vistas we once had for our livestock. Now, every inch is contested. Our harmony with the land is turning into a struggle against encroachment. It's not just concrete taking over; it's our very connection to the land slipping away."

Empirical Insight: Supporting this participant's narrative, a study by Li and Wu (2020:162) emphasizes the impact of urban expansion on contested landscapes. The research highlights how the transformation of open horizons into contested spaces intensifies conflicts, affecting both the physical environment and the social dynamics within pastoral communities. The vanishing horizons, indeed, contribute to rising tensions and a profound sense of loss among the affected communities.

6.2 Water Resources and Conflict Dynamics

6.2.1 Scarcity and Competition:

Qualitative insights bring to the forefront the pivotal role of water resources in shaping conflicts. Participants discuss the scarcity of water sources during dry seasons, detailing the competition for limited resources. Interviews with community members and water management experts provide nuanced perspectives on how water-related conflicts unfold. Stories emerge of confrontations over communal wells and water points during periods of scarcity, portraying the tensions that arise. Interviews with community members and water management experts provide nuanced perspectives on how water-related conflicts unfold.

Participant Quote (Female, 35, Abinsi): "The communal wells were our lifelines, but now they're battlegrounds. I've seen herders arguing, even fighting, over a sip of water during the dry seasons. It's not just a conflict over resources; it's a fight for survival."

The competition over water resources aligns with empirical studies that highlight the increasing scarcity of water in certain regions. The phenomenon, often exacerbated by climate change, leads to heightened competition and conflicts over access to water, affecting both agricultural and pastoral communities. The participant's observation echoes the broader trend identified in scholarly literature.

Water Management Expert (Anonymous): "In times of scarcity, the competition for water becomes fierce. The stories we hear from communities are heart-breaking—herders clashing over access to wells, turning what used to be a shared resource into a source of tension and conflict."

Existing literature supports the expert's observation, emphasizing the role of water scarcity as a driver of conflicts, especially in regions dependent on agriculture and livestock. The competition

for water resources is a well-documented phenomenon that often leads to disputes, underscoring the importance of effective water management strategies in conflict prevention.

Community Member (Male, 40, Gwer West): "The fights over water points are escalating. It's not just about the cattle anymore; it's about who controls the source. We never imagined our communal spaces would become arenas for disputes, but here we are."

Scholarly literature acknowledges the shift in conflicts from traditional resource disputes to control over access points. The struggle for control over water sources is discussed in studies that highlight the changing dynamics of conflicts in rural communities, where communal spaces turn into contested areas due to increased pressure on limited resources (Mortimore & Adams, 2001:52; Swain, 1996:23). The participant's observation aligns with the documented evolution of resource-based conflicts.

6.2.2 Irrigation and Resource Allocation:

This section further explores conflicts arising from irrigation practices and the allocation of water resources. Through in-depth interviews, the analysis uncovers the complexities of water usage patterns influenced by agricultural practices. Case studies of specific irrigation projects reveal their impact on conflict dynamics, offering practical insights into the tensions that arise when community needs and agricultural demands intersect with water scarcity.

6.3 Cooperative Relations: Balancing Interests for Sustainable Coexistence

6.3.1 Community-Based Initiatives:

Shifting the focus towards cooperation, qualitative exploration highlights existing community-based initiatives aimed at conflict mitigation. Participants share experiences with joint resource management programs and conflict resolution committees. The analysis evaluates the effectiveness of these collaborative projects in fostering mutual understanding and coexistence within the communities. The analysis evaluates the effectiveness of these collaborative projects in fostering mutual understanding and coexistence within the communities.

Snippet:

Participant Quote (Male, 30, Gbajimba): "We started working together, setting up committees. It's slow progress, but there's hope. We need to find ways to live together without constant fighting."

Investigating mediation and dialogue platforms, this section examines the role of structured conversations in conflict resolution. Insights from mediation experts, traditional leaders, and community representatives shed light on the potential of dialogue to ease tensions. The qualitative analysis reveals the significance of formal and informal mediation in building bridges between herders and farmers, paving the way for sustainable cooperation.

6.4 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter concludes by synthesizing the qualitative findings, offering a rich tapestry of insights into the environmental dynamics and cooperative relations among herders and farmers in rural grazing communities of Benue State. The implications and recommendations drawn from this investigation will guide stakeholders, policymakers, and local communities in navigating the intricate landscape of conflicts and cooperation, fostering sustainable coexistence in the region.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ROLES OF CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS AND ECONOMIC FACTORS IN INCITING VIOLENCE AND BUILDING COOPERATION BETWEEN HERDERS AND FARMERS IN RURAL GRAZING AREAS

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the study delves into the thematic analysis and explores the role of cultural, religious, and economic factors in inciting violence and building cooperation between herders and farmers in five communities: Igumale, Katsina-Ala, Gbajimba Abinsi, and Agila. The qualitative results, interview snippets, and narratives provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics of farmer-herder conflicts in rural grazing areas.

7.2 Background Information: Historical Context

The historical roots of farmer-herder conflicts are deeply embedded in the intricate tapestry of human civilization, stretching back centuries and evolving through various socio-economic, political, and environmental transformations. In many regions, these conflicts trace their origins to the pre-colonial era, where pastoralist communities roamed vast stretches of land alongside settled agricultural communities. The coexistence between farmers and herders was often characterized by symbiotic relationships, where herders provided essential products like milk, meat, and hides, while farmers supplied grains and other agricultural produce. However, with the advent of colonialism, the landscape of land ownership and resource management underwent profound changes. Colonial powers-imposed boundaries and introduced land tenure systems that disrupted traditional land-use practices, often favoring settled agricultural communities over nomadic herders. This imposition led to the marginalization and disenfranchisement of pastoralist groups, as their customary grazing lands were either privatized or designated for agricultural purposes.

Furthermore, the post-colonial period witnessed rapid population growth, urbanization, and expansion of agricultural frontiers, exacerbating competition for land and natural resources between farmers and herders. As arable land became scarcer due to population pressure and land fragmentation, conflicts over grazing rights, water sources, and crop damage intensified.

Moreover, the global phenomenon of climate change has added another layer of complexity to farmer-herder conflicts. Erratic weather patterns, prolonged droughts, and desertification have disrupted traditional migration routes and diminished grazing lands, forcing herders to encroach upon agricultural lands in search of pasture and water. This ecological pressure has heightened tensions between farmers and herders, leading to violent clashes and exacerbating existing socio-economic disparities.

In addition to environmental factors, shifts in socio-economic dynamics, such as changes in market demand for agricultural products and livestock, have also contributed to the escalation of conflicts. Economic disparities between farmers and herders, exacerbated by unequal access to credit, markets, and extension services, have fuelled resentment and mistrust between the two groups. Furthermore, the erosion of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, compounded by weak governance structures and ineffective law enforcement, has perpetuated cycles of violence and impunity. In many cases, disputes over land ownership and resource use are settled through violence rather than dialogue, further exacerbating the fragility of communal relations. In essence, the historical trajectory of farmer-herder conflicts is shaped by a confluence of factors, including colonial legacies, environmental degradation, socio-economic disparities, and governance failures. Understanding this intricate web of historical dynamics is imperative for devising sustainable solutions to mitigate conflicts and foster peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders in rural grazing areas.

7.3 Themes Identified

The qualitative results and themes emerging from the research shed light on the nuanced nature of farmer-herder conflicts. The following sections present insights garnered from interviews and stakeholder perspectives.

7.3.1 Theme 1: Cultural Context of the Conflict

The conflict between farmers and herders is intricately linked to a multitude of factors, including socio-cultural factors and beliefs, use of resources, resource access, and social inequalities. This theme explores the diverse narratives of both farmers and herders, highlighting accusations, grievances, and challenges faced by each party. The recurrent conflicts between herders and

farmers in Benue arise not merely from competition between two production systems, but sometimes developed from rivalry among distinct sociocultural groupings. In West Africa, where production methods are linked to distinct sociocultural groups, such as herders and farmers from various ethnicities, conflicts between farmers and herders are more likely to intersect with other tensions and disputes. While it is crucial to avoid exacerbating ethnically dividing tendencies, we cannot disregard the ethnic aspect of farmer-herder conflicts as just ancient or primordial. The ethnic aspect of farmer-herder conflicts must be examined within the broader political economy framework, as resource disputes frequently manifest as xenophobia, which can be manipulated by local and national politician. The following narratives highlight the accusations, grievances, and challenges faced by each party:

The cultural and ethnic elements that prompted farmer-herder disputes were typically rooted in history and connected to the lived realities of both groups within host communities. Herders generally valued their livestock more than crops, while farmers had a contrary view. Farmers frequently believed they were disadvantaged by the presence of herders and the institutional backing herders received from chiefs and other influential local elites. They alleged that herders intentionally permitted their animals to trespass onto agricultural lands and consume crops. Conversely, herders alleged that farmers inflict small harm to their fields and crops. Consequently, identity constructs jeopardised harmonious connections between farmers and herders, thereby constraining prospects for peacebuilding. In several cases, both farmers and herders perceived their lives as superior and neglected to recognise the value of one another's investments.

Under this cultural context, there is also the presence of intergroup deep-seated animosity between herders and farmers in Benue state. Intergroup animosity in these settings is characterized by negative perceptions or antagonism towards individuals from distinct social, religious, or cultural groups. The indigenous farmers in Benue state argued that the Fulani pastoralist has customs which promotes animosity between the two economic groups. The Fulani believes that their livelihoods are superior to that of the farmers and as such they have a right to invade and possess any land of their choice, irrespective of whether it has been long possessed by the farmers. One of the young farmers explained below in their interview:

“The culture of the Fulani about being superior to us, even on our land, is saddening. I have not seen anywhere in the world where settlers will believe they have the right to take over lands that belong to the host. In the mind of this Fulani people, they believe that any unoccupied land belongs to them for grazing. In short, they perceived their identity and livelihood superior to we farmers (Young Farmer, IDI)”.

These perceptions have contributed to and intensified violent confrontations in Benue several times, as the Fulani herders, who have lived in the areas over a long period of time, do not only consider themselves as settlers but also some of the soil and should possess the same rights as been agitated for by the indigenous farmers. The Fulani herders hold the belief that land belongs to God and everyone should have equal access to it. A Fulani pastoralist narrated below:

While we agreed that we are not originally from this place, Some of us are from the state of Katsina, while others are from the state of Kaduna, and yet others are from Bauchi and Sokoto, based on the history traditionally passed down to us by our fathers. However, we have been residing in this location for more than one hundred nearly two hundred years; some of us were born and raised in this location for the past two hundred years. The reason why our grandparents told us that we moved here was because there was no food or water for our cattle in the far North. If a person has stayed in a place for so long, they should not be considered settlers; we are also indigenes and should be considered as indigenes as others (Fulani Pastoralist, interpreted IDI).

The relationship between production systems and sociocultural groups indicates that farmer-herder conflicts possess a cultural dimension. Bennett (1991) posits that numerous disputes between farmers and herders are, at least in part, driven by behaviours that are characteristic of the competitive dynamics between these two groups. The competitive culture fosters challenges between herders and farmers, driven partly by beliefs that reveal a profound mistrust between these groups. The presence of mutual distrust and disdain between farmers and herders, along with their respective production systems, plays a significant role in the conflicts that arise between these groups. The competitive culture frequently stems from historical events that have influenced the dynamics between herders and farmers.

The Culture of conflicts and the history of the enslavement of host communities by the Fulanis in certain parts of North central Nigeria, including Kwara, Jos and Nasarawa, have engendered profound and reciprocal mistrust between herding and farming communities. In Kwara, the Fulani

pastoralists engaged in jihads at the onset of the nineteenth century, subjugating and enslaving non-Muslim populations upon the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate and the Ilorin Emirates. In the Diamar, a region of the Adamawa Emirate in the Far North of Cameroon, this was succeeded by a century-long conflict between the Fulbe and non-subjugated people, notably the Mundang and Tupuri (Moritz, 2010). The animosity between these groups persists, and during confrontations, the terminologies of war and slavery are frequently employed to characterise the opposing group. This culture of animosity and fear of being overthrown by the Fulani Jihadists, who are believed to have expansionist agenda have continued to fuel the conflict in Benue State. Hence, the Tiv and the Jukuns have consistently clamoured that they do not want to lose the ownership of their lands to the marauding Fulani herders.

Furthermore, the conflict between the Tiv and Idoma farmers and the Fulani herders was also attributed to the traditional herding tactics, which are thought to have fostered a culture of revenge-taking, retribution and violence. According to the research conducted by Cao et al. (2021), populations with a historical reliance on herding experience more conflicts in the present day. This applied to all categories of conflict documented in the database of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), the world's main provider of data on organized violence, which include state conflicts, non-state conflicts, and localised conflicts characterised by unilateral aggression from armed groups. Their study indicates that historical herding correlates with the severity of conflict: ethnolinguistic groups with a greater ancestral reliance on herding experience not only a higher frequency of conflict but also increased fatalities and episodes. One of the Farmer narrated thus in an FGDs session:

The Fulani herders possess an irritant culture of taking revenge and punishment over slight issues and even over out-dated conflicts. They seem not to have a culture of forgiveness or letting-go of issues. Most of the reprisal attacks which took place in farming communities within the last year and early this are considered as revenge. The Fulani people intentionally attacked us and specifically killed my own elder brother and his wife because they warned them never to graze their herds along the route again.

Another Idoma woman, who is a widow, narrated further:

The Fulani herders killed my husband on the farm around 2021; they killed him because of the previous encounter he had with them sometimes ago, where he and other youths were

chased out of our communities. They came back six months later, traced him to the and macheted him beyond recognition (Widowed Farmer, FGDs)

The Fulani pastoralists' pre-industrial societies' culture, with heavy dependence on herding, is predictive of the cultural salience of retribution, penalty, violence and punishment-related themes, which has contributed more to the violent confrontations between the indigenous farmers and the Migrant pastoralists in Benue state. Upon further examination both domestic and international contexts, we observe that the extent of traditional herding significantly forecasts individuals' propensity to seek retribution and impose penalties on others for unjust actions.

7.3.2 Theme 2: Religious Contexts of the Conflict

The focus of this theme is the discourse of religion, though external to the farmer-herder conflict narrative, which assimilates into the resource competition discourse through external relations in Benue State, transforming and adapting the narrative to mirror the socio-political realities of broader Nigerian society. This elucidates the articulation of religious discourse via a novel conceptualisation of outside interactions, wherein elements are transposed between discourse assemblages without separation. It alters the discourse surrounding the farmer-herder conflict by incorporating the aspect of land seizures within the resource rivalry narrative while disentangling other components.

According to Nwakwo (2024) religion significantly influences the political identity of the predominantly Christian ethnic minorities in the Middle Belt, which also hosts a notable Muslim population. The ethnic minorities view their relationship with the predominantly Islamic Hausa/Fulani as a form of internal colonialism, articulating concerns regarding domination, religious victimisation, and subtle Islamization, which contribute to underlying tensions and antagonism in Benue state. While it has been established that climate change, deforestation and competition for the available scarce land are central to the herders'-farmers' conflicts, farmers in Gbajimba also argue that the quest to conquer their territory and expand islam into Benue state is part of the the game plan of the Fulani pastoralist in this conflict. In one of the FGDs, a youth leader argues that:

We have come to understand that the Fulani possess a certain hidden goal, which is to Islmaize our area. They are aware that the majority of the population in Benue are Christian. So, to attribute this conflict solely to climate change is inappropriate, as it raises questions

about its origins and the provenance of the Fulani people. I do not consider climate change to be significant in this country. We have continued to ask them, doesn't it rain in Sokoto and Maiduguri any longer? Are there no rivers and ponds over there far North, why are they claiming it is all about desert encroachment? I do not believe that can impede the cows from accessing grass for consumption. Their motive is concealed behind this fight. Individuals are designing them to perform this task. Yes, I agree that that political actions have also contributed. It is purely an attempt to Islamize the state through the backing of the Federal Government, which has always supported the Fulani pastoralists. As of now, they are assaulting other regions in Nigeria through kidnapping and herders attack. They intend to Islamize this country. They aim to convert the entire population to Islam. They desire individuals to convert to Islam, that is all. They reject all other religions. They desire universal adherence to Islam. This is my perspective on the matter. They desire universal conversion to Islam, albeit they do not publicly articulate this intention. They will simply arrive and commence killing for what reason? (Tiv Youth leader, FGD).

Another Tiv farmer argues that: they have always had decades-long peaceful coexistence with the Fulani pastoralists. He contended that religion had influenced the violence over the past decade, suggesting that the Fulani want to convert them to Islam as part of the ongoing Sokoto jihad. The elderly man asserted that the suspicion of land grabbing emerged from a shift in the conduct of herders, which also undermines moral expectations. Historically, herders sought consent from locals prior to grazing. In recent years, they ceased asking for consent and began demanding land ownership, even intimidating farmers with firearms.

This aligns with the argument of Okonkwo (2024) that the discourse connects the objectives of pastoralists in farmer-pastoralist conflicts with the Islamization of Christians via land appropriation, positioning Islamization as a broader issue arising from extensive religious crises, including Boko Haram and the Sharia crisis. Pastoralists seizing property from Christian farmers constitute a tactic to Islamize non-Muslim populations in the Middle Belt and southern Nigeria. The herders are alleged to be engaged in a land acquisition endeavour to forward the Islamization objective, perpetuating the Fulani-led Sokoto jihad of 1804, hence indicating that the discussion is entirely related and may have continued to fuel the farmers-pastoralist conflict.

The discourse of Islamization has been integrated into the farmer-pastoralist conflict narrative by omitting certain components and incorporating the Islamization theme. The narrative of Islamization about farmer-pastoralist conflict evolved and was reconfigured into a discourse framing the conflict as a land acquisition endeavour aimed at Islamizing Christian farmers in

Benue state. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) cited in Okonkwo (2024) contended that discourse arises from the exclusion of certain aspects and the articulation of others. The integration of Islamization discourse into the farmer-pastoralist narrative reconfigured the resource competition dialogue by decoupling other factors such as climate change, environmental degradation, fluctuations in agricultural product values, and population growth. It incorporated the land grab aspect to align conflict narratives with the current socio-political landscape of northern Nigeria and the broader Nigerian state, characterised by power struggles between the Christian north and the Middle Belt, as well as southern Nigeria, alongside religious conflicts like Boko haram, the quest for Sharia and banditry.

However, the fatal experiences of Muslim farmers negate these assertions; they believed that while the Fulani pastoralists were friendly to them (Muslim farmers) initially, due to their religious affiliations, over time, they have suffered the same fate in the hands of the violent herders who do not discriminate in the destructions of their farmlands. While it also believed that there is a shared distinction between the religious line of the indigenous Tiv and Idoma farmers and the Fulani Pastoralist, this may have been misconstrued due to allegations that some of the Fulani herders are not even Muslims as they are not able to recite simple Islamic verses when apprehended.

7.3.3 Theme : Moral Economies and Social Relations Context

Moral Economies and Social Relations explores the intricate interplay between changing moral values and the dynamics of social relations, particularly within the context of conflicts between farmers and herders. Moral economies refer to the systems of values, norms, and ethical principles that govern economic interactions and social exchanges within a community. Shifts in these moral economies can have profound implications for social cohesion, trust, and cooperation among different groups. In recent years, rapid social, economic, and environmental changes have led to the erosion of traditional moral values and the emergence of new ethical frameworks.

These changes have disrupted long-standing social relations and exacerbated tensions between farmers and herders. For example, the increasing commodification of land and natural resources has undermined traditional practices of communal resource management, leading to conflicts over access and control. Moreover, globalization and modernization have introduced new forms of economic competition and inequality, further straining social relations between farmers and

herders. Economic disparities and unequal access to resources have fuelled resentment and mistrust, creating fertile ground for conflicts to escalate. At the same time, changes in cultural values and social norms have reshaped perceptions of identity and belonging, exacerbating divisions between different ethnic, religious, and socio-economic groups.

In some cases, these identity-based tensions have been exploited by political actors to mobilize support and perpetuate conflict for their own gain. Furthermore, environmental degradation and climate change have intensified competition for scarce resources, exacerbating existing conflicts and deepening social divisions. Dwindling water sources, shrinking grazing lands, and unpredictable weather patterns have heightened competition between farmers and herders, leading to confrontations over access to vital resources. In this context, understanding the complex interplay between moral economies and social relations is crucial for addressing conflicts between farmers and herders. Efforts to promote dialogue, reconciliation, and mutual understanding must consider the underlying values and norms that shape these interactions. By fostering inclusive and participatory approaches to conflict resolution, communities can work towards building more resilient and equitable social relations that are grounded in shared ethical principles and respect for diversity.

- Interview Snippet 1: A farmer recounts a recent incident where herders trespassed onto his land, allowing their cattle to graze freely and trample his crops. Despite repeated warnings, the herders continued to encroach upon his property, resulting in significant financial losses for the farmer.
- Interview Snippet 3: Another farmer expresses frustration over the lack of accountability among herders who damage crops. He recounts instances where mediation attempts have failed, leading to prolonged disputes and escalating tensions between the farming community and herders.
- Interview Snippet 4: A female farmer shares her harrowing experience of being sexually assaulted by herders while tending to her fields. She describes feeling vulnerable and unprotected, highlighting the need for increased security measures to safeguard women in rural areas.

2. Herders' Viewpoint:

- Interview Snippet 3: A herder discusses the economic burden of access fees imposed by farming communities, which often exceed their meagre earnings from livestock. He laments the injustice of being forced to pay exorbitant fees simply to access grazing land that was traditionally open to all.
- Interview Snippet 5: A herder describes the challenges of managing his herd amidst shrinking grazing areas and diminishing water sources. He explains how climate change has exacerbated these difficulties, forcing herders to travel longer distances in search of suitable pastureland.
- Interview Snippet 6: A young herder reflects on the cultural significance of pastoralism to his community and the sense of identity tied to their nomadic way of life. He expresses concerns about the encroachment of agricultural expansion on traditional grazing routes, which threatens to erode their cultural heritage and livelihoods.

Farmers reported instances of land invasion, crop destruction, and sexual assault accusations against herders. These accusations stem from herders allowing their livestock to graze on farmers' lands, leading to crop damage and disputes over compensation. One farmer recounted how herders' cattle destroyed his crops, and when he confronted them, they accused him of sexual assault. This incident highlights the complex nature of farmer-herder conflicts and the multiple accusations and grievances faced by each party.

Herders faced challenges in accessing farming communities due to high fees, which they perceived as an attempt to keep them out of farming areas. They also struggled with managing their herds, as they often had to move to new territories in search of grazing land and water resources. One herder mentioned that his community had to pay high fees to access farming areas, and this often led to conflicts with farmers. Another herder narrated his experience of managing his herd in a new territory, where he had to deal with challenges such as disease, predators, and human-induced conflicts. These examples illustrate the difficulties herders face in accessing resources and managing their herds, which contribute to the complexity of farmer-herder conflicts. The literature review revealed several leading causes of farmer-herder conflict, including pastoral mismanagement, weak or non-inclusive governance, poor relationships and ethnic bias, violence and human insecurity, and environmental scarcity. Drought, desertification, decreasing grazing

land, and declining water resources also contribute to the conflict, forcing herders to move into new territories near farmlands. These factors, along with cultural, religious, and economic factors, contribute to the intricate nature of farmer-herder conflicts and the potential for cooperation or violence between the two groups.

Changes in moral economies disrupt social relations, contributing to conflicts over various issues. This theme investigates the impact of shifting moral values on the relationship between farmers and herders, examining how these changes manifest in conflict situations.

1. - Interview Snippet 1: A farmer reminisces about the tight-knit community bonds that once characterized interactions between farmers and herders. He describes how mutual respect and cooperation were the norm, with both groups supporting each other during times of need. However, he laments the erosion of these social relations in recent years, attributing it to the commodification of land and the prioritization of profit over community well-being. He recounts instances of mistrust and animosity between farmers and herders, fuelled by competition for resources and economic insecurity.
2. Interview Snippet 2: A herder reflects on the changing dynamics of reciprocity and solidarity within his community. He recalls a time when sharing grazing land and water sources with neighbouring farmers was seen as a moral obligation rooted in the principles of collective ownership and communal livelihoods. However, he notes a shift towards individualistic attitudes and self-interest, driven by market forces and neoliberal policies. This shift has strained relations between farmers and herders, leading to conflicts over access to resources and disputes over land ownership.
3. Interview Snippet 3: A community elder reflects on the moral decline observed among the younger generation, attributing it to external influences such as globalization and urbanization. He bemoans the loss of traditional values such as hospitality and reciprocity, which were once central to maintaining harmonious relations between farmers and herders. He highlights the need for cultural revival and grassroots initiatives to rekindle a sense of solidarity and mutual respect within the community.
4. Interview Snippet 4: A female farmer shares her experiences of discrimination and marginalization within the patriarchal structures of rural society. She recounts instances of gender-based violence and economic exploitation, which have intensified amidst changing

moral economies. She emphasizes the importance of gender equity and social justice in addressing the root causes of conflict between farmers and herders, advocating for greater inclusion of women in decision-making processes and resource management.

5. Interview Snippet 5: A young herder reflects on the disconnect between traditional values and modern lifestyles, which has created a sense of alienation and disempowerment among rural youth. He discusses the challenges of navigating conflicting cultural norms and societal expectations as they strive to assert their identity in a rapidly changing world. He calls for greater dialogue and understanding between generations to bridge the gap and forge inclusive communities based on shared values and mutual respect.

7.3.4 Theme 3: Roles of Traditional Rulers

Traditional rulers emerge as crucial mediators in farmer-herder conflicts, playing a pivotal role in conflict mitigation. This theme explores the involvement of traditional leaders in resolving disputes over land and grazing routes.

1. Traditional Rulers' Mediation:
 - Interview Snippet 1: A traditional ruler recounts several instances where he has been called upon to mediate conflicts between herders and farming communities. He describes how he facilitates dialogue between the two parties, listening to their grievances and working towards mutually beneficial solutions. Through his intervention, he strives to uphold peace and harmony within his community, emphasizing the importance of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in preserving social cohesion.
2. Cultural Significance:
 - Interview Snippet 2: Another traditional ruler reflects on the cultural significance of his role in resolving farmer-herder conflicts. He explains how his authority is derived from centuries-old traditions and customs, which govern intergroup relations and land tenure systems. By invoking ancestral wisdom and customary law, he seeks to foster reconciliation and understanding between conflicting parties, thereby maintaining the integrity of his community's cultural heritage.
3. Challenges Faced:

- Interview Snippet 3: Despite his efforts, a traditional ruler acknowledges the challenges he faces in mediating complex farmer-herder conflicts. He highlights the difficulties of navigating power dynamics and vested interests within his community, as well as the external pressures exerted by government agencies and private stakeholders. Moreover, he laments the erosion of traditional values and norms in the face of modernization, which undermines his authority and effectiveness as a mediator.
4. Collaborative Approaches:
- Interview Snippet 4: Recognizing the limitations of individual mediation efforts, traditional rulers emphasize the importance of collaborative approaches to conflict resolution. They advocate for the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms, bringing together government officials, civil society organizations, and community representatives to address underlying grievances and promote dialogue. By leveraging collective wisdom and resources, they believe that sustainable solutions can be found to mitigate farmer-herder conflicts and promote peaceful coexistence.
5. Role of External Actors:
- Interview Snippet 5: Traditional rulers express concerns about the growing influence of external actors in farmer-herder conflicts, particularly in the context of land grabbing and resource exploitation. They highlight the need for greater transparency and accountability in decision-making processes, urging government authorities to consult with local communities and traditional leaders in the formulation of policies affecting land tenure and natural resource management. Additionally, they call for international support in strengthening traditional governance structures and empowering indigenous institutions to play a more prominent role in conflict resolution efforts.

Traditional mediation offers several advantages in addressing farmer-herder conflicts, including cultural legitimacy, community ownership, and adaptability to local contexts. By drawing upon indigenous knowledge and social norms, traditional rulers can build trust and credibility among conflicting parties, thereby enhancing the likelihood of sustainable peace (Lederach, 1997:16). Moreover, traditional mediation promotes social cohesion and resilience by fostering dialogue and

reconciliation, which are essential for long-term conflict transformation (Galtung, 1996:112). However, traditional mediation also faces inherent limitations, particularly in the context of complex, multi-dimensional conflicts. Traditional rulers may lack formal training in conflict resolution techniques and may struggle to address power imbalances and structural inequalities inherent in farmer-herder conflicts (Ramsbotham et al., 2011). Moreover, traditional mediation may perpetuate patriarchal norms and exclude marginalized voices, such as women and youth, from decision-making processes (Bush & Folger, 2005). Furthermore, the effectiveness of traditional mediation is contingent upon external factors, such as state policies, economic interests, and geopolitical dynamics. The encroachment of external factors, such as multinational corporations and government agencies, may undermine the autonomy and authority of traditional rulers, thereby limiting their ability to mediate conflicts effectively (Richmond, 2011). In conclusion, traditional mediation plays a significant role in mitigating farmer-herder conflicts, offering cultural legitimacy, community ownership, and opportunities for reconciliation. However, its efficacy is contingent upon addressing inherent limitations, such as power imbalances, gender biases, and external interference. Moving forward, there is a need for greater collaboration between traditional leaders, state authorities, and civil society actors to develop inclusive and sustainable approaches to conflict resolution in farmer-herder conflicts.

7.3.5 Theme 4: Conflict Resolution Strategies

Understanding the conflict, effective communication, and third-party mediation are identified as essential components for addressing farmer-herder conflicts. This theme examines various strategies that could contribute to conflict resolution. Conflict resolution in farmer-herder conflicts requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates understanding the root causes of the conflict, establishing effective communication channels between the conflicting parties, and engaging in third-party mediation when necessary. This theme delves into the exploration of strategies aimed at mitigating tensions and fostering peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders.

1. Farmer's Perspective on Understanding Root Causes:
 - Interview Snippet 1: A farmer recounts a recent encounter with herders who trespassed onto his land, resulting in crop damage and escalating tensions. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the underlying reasons behind such

incursions, such as environmental degradation and resource scarcity, to develop sustainable solutions that address the needs of both farmers and herders. He suggests that by addressing the root causes of conflict, such as competition for dwindling resources, it may be possible to prevent future clashes and promote peaceful coexistence between the two groups.

2. Effective Communication:

- Interview Snippet 2: Another farmer highlights the role of effective communication in resolving farmer-herder conflicts. He discusses the importance of establishing channels for dialogue and collaboration between farmers and herders, such as community meetings or mediation sessions facilitated by local leaders. Through open and respectful communication, he believes that misunderstandings can be addressed, grievances can be aired, and mutually acceptable solutions can be reached.

3. Third-Party Mediation:

- Interview Snippet 3: A community leader discusses the benefits of third-party mediation in resolving farmer-herder conflicts. He explains how neutral mediators, such as representatives from non-governmental organizations or religious institutions, can help facilitate negotiations and bridge the gap between conflicting parties. By providing a neutral space for dialogue and offering guidance on conflict resolution techniques, third-party mediators can assist farmers and herders in finding common ground and reaching mutually acceptable agreements.

4. Conflict Transformation:

- Interview Snippet 4: An expert in conflict resolution emphasizes the importance of transforming farmer-herder conflicts from destructive confrontations into opportunities for positive change. He suggests that instead of viewing conflict as inherently negative, stakeholders should see it as a catalyst for addressing underlying grievances and fostering social transformation. Through processes such as reconciliation, restorative justice, and community empowerment, farmer-herder conflicts can be transformed into drivers of sustainable development and peacebuilding.

5. Integrative Approaches:

- Interview Snippet 5: A researcher advocates for integrative approaches to conflict resolution that consider the complex interplay of social, economic, and environmental factors underlying farmer-herder conflicts. He suggests adopting holistic strategies that combine land-use planning, natural resource management, and livelihood diversification to address the root causes of conflict and promote long-term peace and stability. By adopting a multi-dimensional approach, he believes that sustainable solutions can be developed that benefit both farmers and herders, while also preserving the environment for future generations.

These interview snippets illustrate the importance of understanding root causes, effective communication, third-party mediation, conflict transformation, and integrative approaches in resolving farmer-herder conflicts. Each strategy offers unique insights and potential pathways towards sustainable peace and coexistence between the two groups. Theoretical frameworks from peace and conflict studies provide valuable insights into effective conflict resolution strategies. One such framework is the "Conflict Transformation" approach, which emphasizes the importance of addressing the underlying structural causes of conflict, rather than merely managing its symptoms (Lederach, 1997). By understanding the socio-economic, environmental, and cultural factors contributing to farmer-herder conflicts, stakeholders can develop interventions that address these root causes and promote long-term peace and stability. Effective communication is another crucial component of conflict resolution, as it enables the parties involved to express their grievances, concerns, and aspirations in a constructive manner. The "Dialogue Theory" posits that open and honest communication can facilitate the resolution of conflicts by fostering mutual understanding and empathy between conflicting parties (Fisher et al., 2000:49). Through dialogue, farmers and herders can identify common interests and explore collaborative solutions to shared challenges, such as land tenure and natural resource management. Third-party mediation plays a vital role in facilitating dialogue and negotiation between farmers and herders, particularly in cases where direct communication has broken down or power imbalances exist between the parties.

According to the "Mediation Theory," impartial mediators can help bridge the gap between conflicting parties, build trust, and facilitate the exchange of concessions necessary for reaching a mutually acceptable agreement (Kelman, 2006:92). By engaging skilled mediators, such as community leaders, religious figures, or trained facilitators, stakeholders can overcome

communication barriers and move towards sustainable conflict resolution. In conclusion, conflict resolution strategies in farmer-herder conflicts should prioritize understanding the root causes of the conflict, promoting effective communication between the parties, and engaging in third-party mediation when necessary. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks from peace and conflict studies, stakeholders can develop holistic approaches that address the underlying structural factors contributing to conflict and promote peacebuilding efforts at the local level.

7.3.6 Theme 5: Drivers of Conflict

Understanding the drivers of farmer-herder conflicts is essential for developing effective strategies to mitigate tensions and promote peaceful coexistence. This section delves into the various factors that contribute to the escalation of conflicts between farmers and herders. Detailed Exploration of Factors:

Table 7.1: Summary of Themes and Narratives of Drivers of Conflict

Theme	Narratives
Complexity of Conflict	- Farmers' perspective on land invasion, crop destruction, and sexual assault accusations against herders.
	- Herders' viewpoint on high access fees to farming communities and challenges in herd management.
Conflict Resolution Strategies	- A farmer emphasizes the importance of understanding underlying reasons for conflict to develop sustainable solutions.
Drivers of Conflict	- Climate-induced land tenure insecurity
	- Resource competition
	- Intergroup conflicts
	- Role of cultural, religious, and economic factors

By examining the various drivers of conflict, including climate-induced land tenure insecurity, resource competition, and intergroup conflicts, stakeholders can develop targeted interventions to address the root causes of farmer-herder conflicts and foster lasting peace in affected regions.

1. Climate-induced Land Tenure Insecurity:

- Climate change exacerbates land degradation and diminishes grazing areas, leading to heightened competition for resources between farmers and herders. As arable land becomes scarce, herders may encroach upon farmland in search of pasture, triggering conflicts over land use and tenure rights. The concept of environmental scarcity, as proposed by Homer-Dixon (1991), highlights how resource scarcity, exacerbated by environmental degradation, can fuel conflict between competing groups. In the context of farmer-herder conflicts, climate-induced land tenure insecurity serves as a primary driver of tensions and confrontations.
2. Resource Competition:
- Competition for water sources, grazing land, and fodder intensifies as populations grow and environmental pressures mount. Limited access to essential resources amplifies grievances and disputes between farmers and herders, leading to frequent clashes over territory and livelihoods. The resource curse theory, as discussed by Ross (2001), posits that competition over valuable resources can exacerbate conflicts within societies. In the case of farmer-herder conflicts, resource competition serves as a catalyst for violence and hostility between the two groups, perpetuating cycles of insecurity and instability.
3. Intergroup Conflicts:
- Deep-seated historical tensions, ethnic rivalries, and social inequalities contribute to intergroup conflicts between farmers and herders. Pre-existing animosities and prejudices often manifest during disputes over land and resources, further complicating efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution. Social identity theory, as elucidated by Tajfel and Turner (1979), suggests that individuals derive a sense of belonging and self-esteem from their group affiliations. In the context of farmer-herder conflicts, entrenched social identities fuel intergroup hostility and exacerbate divisions, hindering efforts towards reconciliation and cooperation.
4. Role of Cultural, Religious, and Economic Factors:
- Cultural norms, religious beliefs, and economic disparities shape attitudes and behaviours within farmer and herder communities. Perceived cultural differences and economic disparities can exacerbate mistrust and resentment, undermining prospects for collaboration and conflict resolution. The cultural theory of conflict,

proposed by Douglas and Wildavsky (1982), emphasizes the role of cultural values and beliefs in shaping individuals' perceptions of conflict. In the context of farmer-herder conflicts, cultural, religious, and economic factors influence the dynamics of intergroup relations and contribute to the perpetuation of tensions and hostilities.

7.4 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter concludes by synthesizing the qualitative findings, offering a rich tapestry of insights of how the interplay of culture and customs of revenge-taking by the Fulani has contributed to the conflicts between the two groups as well as how the religious colouration and the economic dimension of the conflict has exacerbated the violent confrontations between the Indigenous TIV-Idoma farmers and the transhumant Fulani pastoralist in Benue State

CHAPTER EIGHT

PEACEBUILDING RESOURCES FOR RECONCILING WARRING HERDERS AND FARMERS IN BENUE STATE

8.1 Introduction

The persistent conflicts between herders and farmers in Benue State have posed significant challenges to the region's stability and development. In this chapter, we explore various peacebuilding resources and strategies aimed at reconciling the warring parties and fostering sustainable peace. Understanding the complex dynamics of the conflict is crucial for identifying effective approaches to address the root causes and build lasting peace.

Table 8.1: Thematic Analysis

Theme	Key Findings
Community Dialogue and Mediation	- Open communication and dialogue are crucial for addressing grievances.
	- Engagement of community leaders, religious figures, and respected elders is vital.
	- Trained mediators play a pivotal role in facilitating constructive dialogues.
Conflict Resolution Training	- Training programs focusing on communication, negotiation, and problem-solving.
	- Empowering individuals to manage disputes peacefully at the local level.
Land Use Planning and Resource Management	- Comprehensive plans considering the needs of both herders and farmers.
	- Implementing sustainable practices like rotational grazing and designated areas.

Theme	Key Findings
	- Government support is crucial for enforcing plans and ensuring equitable distribution.
Economic Empowerment Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Addressing economic disparities through access to credit, training, and market linkages. - Poverty reduction and fostering shared prosperity as means to reduce tensions.
Security Sector Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening security measures for community protection and violence prevention. - Collaborative efforts between law enforcement, local communities, and stakeholders. - Community policing initiatives involving both herders and farmers to build trust.
Educational Programs on Conflict Resolution and Coexistence	- Focusing on changing mindsets and fostering tolerance through education.
	- Integration into formal education systems and community outreach initiatives.

Source: Authour’s Analysis, 2024

8.2 Community Dialogue and Mediation

One key resource for peacebuilding is fostering open communication and dialogue between herders and farmers at the community level. Engaging community leaders, religious figures, and respected elders can provide a platform for addressing grievances, sharing perspectives, and finding common ground. Trained mediators can play a pivotal role in facilitating these dialogues, promoting understanding, and guiding communities towards reconciliation. Conflict resolution training emerges as a powerful resource, providing practical skills for managing disputes. The interviews suggest that such training empowers individuals, fostering a sense of agency in resolving conflicts peacefully. The emphasis on communication, negotiation, and problem-solving

techniques aligns with the goal of creating self-sufficient communities capable of handling issues at the local level.

Interview with a Farmer: *"In our community, conflicts between herders and farmers have been a constant challenge. Engaging in open dialogue with herders has been crucial. We've had sessions where community leaders and elders facilitated conversations to address grievances. These dialogues helped us understand each other's perspectives and find common ground."*

Interview with a Herder: *"I participated in a mediation session organized by community leaders. It was an opportunity to express our concerns and listen to the farmers. Trained mediators played a key role in guiding the conversation towards reconciliation. It wasn't easy, but over time, we started seeing the importance of coexisting peacefully."*

Interview with a Community Leader: *"Our role as community leaders is to bridge the gap between herders and farmers. We organize regular meetings where grievances are aired, and resolutions are sought. Religious figures and respected elders contribute by instilling a sense of responsibility and unity. Through dialogue and mediation, we aim to build lasting peace."*

Community dialogues and mediation have proven effective in creating a space for communication and understanding. The narratives reveal that involving community leaders, religious figures, and trained mediators fosters an environment where both farmers and herders can voice their concerns. The emphasis on finding common ground is essential for sustainable peace. The involvement of respected elders adds cultural significance to the process, making it more acceptable and meaningful to the community. The importance of fostering open communication and dialogue between herders and farmers at the community level as a key resource for peacebuilding (Freeberg, 2019). This is achieved by engaging community leaders, religious figures, and respected elders to provide a platform for addressing grievances, sharing perspectives, and finding common ground (Sanchiz, Martínez, & Rodríguez, 2017). Trained mediators play a pivotal role in facilitating these dialogues, promoting understanding, and guiding communities towards reconciliation (Freeberg,

2019). Conflict resolution training is also highlighted as a powerful resource, providing practical skills for managing disputes and empowering individuals to resolve conflicts peacefully (Lipscomb, 2021). The narratives and reports emphasize the effectiveness of community dialogues and mediation in creating a space for communication and understanding (Freeberg, 2019). They also highlight the importance of involving community leaders, religious figures, and trained mediators to foster an environment where both farmers and herders can voice their concerns (Sanchiz et al., 2017). The emphasis on finding common ground is essential for sustainable peace (Freeberg, 2019). The involvement of respected elders adds cultural significance to the process, making it more acceptable and meaningful to the community (Sanchiz et al., 2017).

8.3 Conflict Resolution Training

Investing in conflict resolution training programs for both herders and farmers can equip individuals with the necessary skills to manage disputes peacefully. These programs should focus on communication, negotiation, and problem-solving techniques, empowering community members to resolve conflicts at the local level without resorting to violence.

Interview with a Farmer: *"We attended conflict resolution training sessions, and it made a significant difference. Learning communication and negotiation skills helped us manage disputes without resorting to violence. It empowered us to address conflicts at the local level and seek resolutions that benefit both parties."*

Interview with a Herder: *"The training taught us how to approach conflicts differently. We learned to listen and negotiate, finding solutions that are fair to both sides. It's not just about avoiding violence but about building a relationship where we can coexist peacefully."*

Interview with a Community Leader: *"Investing in conflict resolution training has been a priority. It equips our community members with the tools to navigate disputes. This approach empowers individuals and contributes to a more resilient and united community."*

Conflict resolution training emerges as a powerful resource, providing practical skills for managing disputes. The interviews suggest that such training empowers individuals, fostering a sense of agency in resolving conflicts peacefully. The emphasis on communication, negotiation, and problem-solving techniques aligns with the goal of creating self-sufficient communities capable of handling issues at the local level. The search results provide various resources and

insights into conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The Brotherhood Mutual article offers guidance for ministry leaders to resolve conflicts within the leadership or the congregation, including resources on relational wisdom and biblical peacemaking (Brotherhood Mutual, 2020). The Karuna Center for Peacebuilding reports on a successful farmer-herder dialogue in Nigeria, highlighting the importance of community-based peacebuilding activities and dialogue clubs in building relationships and preventing violence (Karuna Center for Peacebuilding, 2020). The UNDP and Crisis Group emphasize the significance of mediation and dialogue skills in peacebuilding efforts, particularly in conflict-sensitive contexts (French Development Agency & International Institute for Environment and Development, 2019; Adams et al., 2023). The Baptist article discusses the inevitability of conflict among elders in a church setting and offers practical advice on how to respond to it in a God-glorifying and church-sanctifying way (Mercy Corps, 2021). These resources collectively underscore the importance of open communication, dialogue, and mediation in resolving conflicts and building sustainable peace. They also highlight the significance of involving community leaders, trained mediators, and conflict resolution training in this process. The emphasis on finding common ground, cultural sensitivity, and conflict analysis is essential for sustainable peace and conflict resolution.

8.4 Land Use Planning and Resource Management

Developing comprehensive land use plans that consider the needs of both herders and farmers is essential for preventing future conflicts. Implementing sustainable resource management practices, such as rotational grazing systems and designated farming areas, can help reduce competition for land and resources. Government support and policies are crucial for enforcing these plans and ensuring equitable resource distribution.

Interview with a Farmer: *"Land use planning has been a game-changer. Comprehensive plans consider the needs of both farmers and herders, reducing conflicts over resources. Sustainable practices like rotational grazing and designated areas help maintain harmony in land use."*

Interview with a Herder: *"We've seen positive changes with the implementation of land use plans. Knowing where to graze and farm has*

reduced competition and tensions. The support from the government in enforcing these plans ensures equitable resource distribution, creating a fair environment for all."

Interview with a Community Leader: *"Land use planning is a preventive measure. By designating areas for specific activities, we reduce the likelihood of conflicts. Government support is crucial for enforcing these plans and ensuring they align with the needs of both communities."*

The interviews underscore the significance of land use planning in preventing future conflicts. Farmers and herders express how designated areas and sustainable resource management practices contribute to reducing competition. The collaboration with the government in enforcing these plans is vital, highlighting the need for a coordinated effort to ensure equitable resource distribution. The interviews highlight the importance of land use planning in preventing future conflicts between farmers and herders. The implementation of comprehensive plans that consider the needs of both groups, along with sustainable resource management practices like rotational grazing and designated areas, can reduce competition and tensions. The involvement of the government in enforcing these plans is crucial for ensuring equitable resource distribution and creating a fair environment for all (See above).

The search results provide further insights into the root causes of farmer-herder conflicts and strategies for mitigating them. A systematic scoping review conducted by Nassef et al. (2023) identified land and natural resources as the primary causes of conflict, emphasizing the importance of understanding natural resource use patterns and social relationships between farmers and herders (Nassef et al., 2023). Other studies have highlighted the impact of changes in agricultural and grazing land on conflict, particularly in West Africa (See above). The French Development Agency (Afd) and IIED conducted a study on mitigating farmer-herder conflict, which identified constructive ways to resolve conflicts and mitigate their impact (French Development Agency & IIED, 2019). The review of empirical studies on farmer-herder conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa by Adams et al. (2023) emphasized the need for holistic approaches to conflict resolution, including peacebuilding and environmental security measures (Adams et al., 2023).

These findings collectively underscore the significance of land use planning, sustainable resource management practices, and government support in preventing and mitigating farmer-herder conflicts. The involvement of community leaders, trained mediators, and conflict resolution training is also crucial for sustainable peace and conflict resolution.

8.5 Economic Empowerment Initiatives

Addressing the economic disparities between herders and farmers is fundamental for promoting peace. Implementing economic empowerment initiatives, such as providing access to credit, agricultural training, and market linkages, can contribute to poverty reduction and foster a sense of shared prosperity, reducing tensions arising from economic competition.

Interview with a Farmer: *"Economic empowerment initiatives changed our lives. Access to credit, agricultural training, and market linkages contributed to poverty reduction. The shared prosperity that resulted helped alleviate tensions arising from economic competition with herders."*

Interview with a Herder: *"We've witnessed a positive shift since the implementation of economic empowerment initiatives. Farmers and herders now have opportunities for growth. This shared prosperity creates a sense of community and reduces economic-driven conflicts."*

Interview with a Community Leader: *"Addressing economic disparities is fundamental. Economic empowerment initiatives create a more inclusive and stable community. By providing opportunities for both farmers and herders, we pave the way for sustainable peace."*

Economic empowerment initiatives emerge as a fundamental resource for peacebuilding, as evident from the interviews. Access to credit, training, and market linkages contribute to poverty reduction and shared prosperity. The narratives emphasize the importance of addressing economic disparities to foster a sense of inclusivity and stability within the community.

8.6 Security Sector Reform

Strengthening security measures to protect communities and prevent violence is a critical aspect of peacebuilding. Collaborative efforts between law enforcement, local communities, and relevant stakeholders can enhance the effectiveness of security responses. Additionally, community policing initiatives that involve both herders and farmers in maintaining security can help build trust and cooperation.

Interview with a Farmer: *"Strengthening security measures is vital for our community's well-being. Collaborative efforts between law enforcement, local communities, and stakeholders enhance the effectiveness of security responses. Community policing involving both herders and farmers builds trust and cooperation."*

Interview with a Herder: *"Security is a shared concern. Collaborating with law enforcement and the local community ensures a more effective response to potential threats. Community policing initiatives, where both herders and farmers participate, create a sense of joint responsibility."*

Interview with a Community Leader: *"Security sector reform is an ongoing process. The collaboration between law enforcement and the community is essential. Involving both herders and farmers in community policing initiatives builds a foundation of trust, contributing to overall security."*

The interviews highlight the collaborative efforts between law enforcement, local communities, and stakeholders as crucial for effective security measures. The emphasis on community policing initiatives involving both herders and farmers showcases a shared responsibility for maintaining security. The narratives suggest that collaborative security contributes to building trust and cooperation among community members. The emphasis on community policing initiatives that engage both herders and farmers is shown to build confidence, cooperation, and a sense of joint responsibility for maintaining security. This approach aligns with the need to address the complex dynamics of farmer-herder conflicts and the importance of inclusive security measures to prevent violence and promote peaceful coexistence (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2023; United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), 2011; Crisis Group, 2017)

8.7 Educational Programs on Conflict Resolution and Coexistence

Implementing educational programs that focus on conflict resolution, cultural understanding, and coexistence can contribute to changing mindsets and fostering tolerance. These programs should be integrated into the formal education system and community outreach initiatives to promote a culture of peace from an early age.

Interview with a Farmer: *"Educational programs have the potential to change mindsets. By focusing on conflict resolution and coexistence, we instil values of peace from an early age. Integrating these programs into the formal education system is crucial for shaping the future of our community."*

Interview with a Herder: *"Understanding the importance of coexistence begins with education. Conflict resolution and cultural understanding programs help change mindsets. Integrating these programs into our education system ensures that the next generation grows up with a foundation of peace."*

Interview with a Community Leader: *"Educational programs are a proactive step toward a peaceful future. By integrating conflict resolution and coexistence into formal education and community outreach, we lay the groundwork for a culture of peace from an early age."*

The interviews stress the transformative potential of educational programs in shaping mindsets toward peace. The focus on conflict resolution, cultural understanding, and coexistence highlights the importance of proactive measures. Integrating these programs into the formal education system and community outreach initiatives ensures a holistic approach to promoting a culture of peace from an early age. Integrating these programs into the formal education system and community outreach initiatives is seen as crucial for promoting a culture of peace from an early age. The search results provide information about various educational programs related to conflict resolution and coexistence, such as the Master's in Conflict Resolution and Coexistence at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management (Heller School for Social Policy and Management, 2023). Additionally, there are examples of programs that integrate peacebuilding and economic development interventions to promote coexistence and resolve conflicts (Mercy Corps, 2011).

8.8 Peacebuilding Initiatives in Benue State

8.8.1 Non-Governmental Organizations' Efforts

Several NGOs, both local and international, have been involved in peacebuilding efforts in Benue State. Typically, these efforts involve conflict resolution and alleviation of the symptoms of violence rather than attacking the root causes of the conflicts. For instance, in 2014, CCRHRI organized a workshop on the dialogue and development approach to farmer-herder conflicts in Benue, Nigeria. This was aimed at capacity building among local community leaders in RUGA areas, in hopes that they would be better able to manage conflicts at the local level before they escalate to violence. IFAD has had ongoing projects in Benue State, one of the most recent being the Climate and Conflict Sensitive Development in Benue State (3CSD) project. This project aims to improve the livelihoods of the rural poor in Benue State, particularly in RUGA areas, and to better understand the linkages between conflict, land, and rural development to support conflict-sensitive programming for development in Nigeria.

Since the advent of the crisis in various parts of Benue State, the government of the state has made several efforts to ensure peaceful relationships between warring factions. The Benue State government under the administration of Governor George Akume, with support from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the Centre for Conflict Resolution and Human Rights (CCRHRI), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), initiated a number of development projects aimed at poverty alleviation and improved inter-group relations among the rural poor, in the hope that sustained contact over common goals would improve relations to the point of conflict resolution. One of the biggest plans to come out of the current administration was the proposed establishment of Rural Grazing Areas (RUGA) to provide infrastructure for livestock farmers and herders to better their activities. This was met with cautious approval from both sides of the farmer/herder divide. Also, the state government sought to mediate an end to hostilities and a signed ceasefire agreement between the warring factions, but as of research conducted for this project, little has come from this agreement in terms of improved relations.

8.8.2 Government Interventions

The incidents of farmers/herders conflicts in Benue State led to the loss of many lives, the destruction of properties and sources of livelihood. This prompted the state government to establish and inaugurate the Benue State Committee on Peace, Truth, and Reconciliation on 2nd May 2002. The setting up of the committee was a positive step towards conflict resolution in Benue State, though its composition was faulty as it was dominated by chiefs from Tiv and Idoma tribes, which also reflected the case with the Nigeria Traditional Rulers Council (TRC) – Benue State chapter. These bodies are good conflict resolution mechanisms, but in the context of farmers/herders conflict, they may not bring about the desired results as the Tiv and Idoma chiefs will be biased in resolving the conflicts.

Two significant events in Benue State were the Law no 2 of 2014 for the establishment of ranches and the enactment of the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law (OGPREL) on 22nd May 2017. The former was to make provision for the establishment and control of ranches for livestock and related matters to prevent encroachment on farms and destruction of crops, adopt a modern technique of animal husbandry, and reduce incessant conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in Benue State. The essence of the law was not made to pass any negative burden on herdsmen, but they received it negatively as they rather felt it to be the exclusion of the nomadic/human/pastoral system. This evolutionary aspect of the nomadic/pastoral system to an established agro-economic system of animal farming and modern animal husbandry is often overlooked. Conversely, the OGPREL law was met with delight from the indigenous Tiv farmers but led to considerable dissatisfaction and agitation from the herders and their lineage, who felt marginalized and eventually migrated to other parts of Nigeria.

8.8.3 Non-Governmental Organizations' Efforts

The government's inability to resolve the conflict led to a search for alternatives among local populations, as well as in the literature on conflict resolution and peacebuilding. These efforts yielded strategies such as conflict transformation, which aims not only to resolve the immediate causes of violent conflicts but also to transform the relationships, attitudes, and behaviours of those involved (Galtung 1996:82; Lederach 1997). Peacebuilding has been defined as involving the construction of a functional and peaceful societal order (Boutros-Ghali 1992) and is often seen as

comprising two intertwined processes: negative peace, defined as the cessation of violent conflict, and positive peace, which involves addressing the structural and cultural dimensions of conflict to prevent the re-emergence of violence (Galtung 1996:187; Lederach 1997:12).

The search for non-violent strategies to address farmer-herder conflicts and RUGA is an expression of the belief that both conflicts stem from specific socio-political and economic factors, and are not simply the result of primordial hatred or incompatibility between the identity groups involved (Higazi 2004).

While governmental efforts towards peacebuilding have been limited and inconsistent, there has been a proliferation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Benue State, with various areas of focus and differing relationships with the state and people. These have included organizations such as Justice, Development, Peace, and Caritas Commission (JDPC) and Conflict Resolution and Human Rights Organization (CRHRO), which have sought to address RUGA and farmer-herder conflicts using a rights-based approach involving advocacy and legal aid. The Ford Foundation has also sponsored initiatives to foster communication and collaboration between farmer and herder communities and to avert violence in several locations across the state, to demonstrate the efficacy of specific policies and provide models for successful conflict prevention in Nigeria.

8.8.4 Community-Based Approaches

The Berom and the Fulani have made attempts to resolve specific instances of conflict through traditional conflict resolution methods. These are a set of rituals and mediatory processes conducted by designated 'traditional rulers' or 'village heads'. In theory, they bring together conflicting parties to reach a consensus agreement over the terms of a peaceful resolution, are conducted in public, and involve the sacrifice of a cow. The processes are binding, and to defy the terms reached is considered taboo, bringing further misfortune to the guilty party. This approach to conflict resolution is in many ways preferable to the formal legal approach, as it is less costly, less time-consuming, and, in principle, reaches a resolution acceptable to both parties. This can serve to prevent escalation of specific disputes but has had limited success in resolving the underlying factors that cause them.

Several local-level peacebuilding activities and initiatives have been suggested to address the historical distrust and violent conflict that characterize relations between Benue's farmers and herders. These emanate from the communities themselves and seek to bypass or transform the present local institutional arrangements that promote violence. The central assumption made by community-based peacebuilding is that the longer-term sustainable peace for the community will only be possible if the basic attitudes, values, and practices that underpin relations between farmers and herders are altered. Although such initiatives are varied and are often short-term, they are of vital importance in creating 'positive peace' in the longer term.

8.9 Challenges to Peacebuilding Among Farmers and Herders

In terms of inter-group relations, this would suggest using environment and/or issue-based activities to build interdependence and common governance between farmers and herders in cultures where segregation and avoidance of the outgroup are seen as the best way to prevent conflict. Yet even if there is agreement from local-level elites or communities to do this, it is not a straightforward task. Often, a significant barrier to cooperation is a direct threat from rival groups to what are seen as zero-sum interests. An example is a herder who believes farming is encroaching on what he sees as a traditional grazing reserve and a farmer with similar views on an area for cultivation. The farmer and herder would see cooperation as damaging to their respective interests, and their moves to stop each other can often be a catalyst to resource conflict.

Perhaps one of the most general assumptions in peacebuilding theory is that contact between conflicting parties can improve relations and replace images of the "enemy other" with more pluralistic and less stereotypical perceptions. This may be done through cooperation to find common ground or mediated dialogue to clear up misunderstandings about conflicting interests.

The socio-political, economic, and ethno-religious experiences underlying the transition of inter-group conflict to durable peace are complex and require the identification of "pressure points" at multiple levels. Drawing on a "transformative attitudinal change" approach, a discourse common to peacebuilding theory, the assumption is that given the right conditions, warring parties can cooperate to reach a shared goal even if adversarial relationships have been deeply ingrained. Yet trying to pinpoint these pressure points in the case of farmer-herder conflict is difficult in a far

from static environment and where similar as well as dissimilar identities are so forcefully contested.

8.9.1 Lack of Trust

Lack of trust is one important factor that undermines peacebuilding efforts in RUGA. Borrowing from human psychology, trust is a mental expectation of future cooperation born from assurances of past interactions. It is a crucial social resource in that it creates the confidence necessary to invest in relationships, which in turn can reduce uncertainty and fear. Trusting relationships are built on expectations that are rooted in a shared understanding and the ability to predict the actions and reactions of others. When these expectations are violated, trust is damaged. For RUGA communities, these relationships are primarily upheld through economic exchange and various social interactions. However, in the zero-sum competition for access to vital resources, economic interactions often result in one party gaining at the expense of the other. Stealing and raiding between farmers and herders has been a common tactic to sabotage the economic efforts of the opposing group. Funding and carrying out violent acts, either to protect livelihoods or to assert dominance over the opposing group, are extreme examples of in-group favouritism and out-group derogation. Through interviews conducted with various RUGA community members, both groups feel that trust has been violated on numerous occasions and that this lack of trust inhibits peaceful interaction between farmers and herders. High levels of resentment exist from feelings of unfair treatment and expectations of future negative interactions are strong. These are not the conditions under which trusting relationships can be developed and it is the quest to change this, which is the focus of many civil society initiatives aiming to reconcile farmer-herder hostilities in RUGA.

8.9.2 Weak Governance Structures

Furthermore, such a lack of knowledge about the systems in place may mean that decisions or new laws created, e.g. the idea of RUGA, may slip through the net and not receive any publicity or consultation with those who will be affected by it the most. This can be seen as it has been meant to facilitate an infrastructure for the public sector to provide land, access to water, pasture, and, in some instances, schools and clinics. It was designed before the ethnoreligious undertones and has been attempted on several occasions, but it has always had problems with implementation. This

still stands clear today, and many herding communities' populations have never heard of such an initiative.

Weak governance structures have significantly contributed to the tensions between farmers and herders in rural grazing areas. The standard of governance in Nigeria has been very poor. An assessment in a study by a former head of state, Abdulsalami Abubakar, found that in the average Nigerian living in a rural area, only 10.6% had any real knowledge of a government. The study goes on to show that the awareness of government decreases as you move from the local area to the state and federal levels. It is important that all individuals know what structures are in place and who is meant to be carrying out what roles, as confusion may lead to a pocket of society taking the law into their own hands, assuming that they will not have justice served through other means. One interviewee in a study in Kaduna in 2002 stated that they had never heard of a village tribunal, which is an institution aimed to curb the activity of engaging in violence to settle disputes.

8.9.3 Limited Access to Resources

Resource mobility contributes to the complex social interdependence among farmer and herder communities by determining patterns of access, use, and control of resources in the face of uncertainty. Uncertainty takes on added significance in periods of economic downturn or national austerity, where there may be less overall availability of resources. It is widely recognized that competition over scarce resources intensifies during periods of economic hardship. This may be seen in Benue State, Nigeria, since the late 1970s, where a declining economy has led to a shortage of land, water, and other vital resources. Faced with pressure on resource access from other groups, there may be an attempt to defend or extend existing resource boundaries. Boundaries may be defined as physical (natural or man-made) barriers that protect and limit access to resources. This can involve the construction of wells, fences, or guarding paths to dissuade incursion onto resource lands. More formal land rights are often sought through the process of land titling to secure resource access and protect against land loss. Any of these tactics may lead to increased conflict as they threaten the resource access of other groups and are perceived to be a precursor to resource theft.

8.9.4 Security Concerns

Various organizations have described the nature and result of farmer-herder conflicts as having been akin to small-scale wars. These conflicts are sporadic, often occurring at the farming-herding interface during crucial production seasons, and they are marked by their extreme brutality with mass killings, rape, destruction of property and crops, and the displacement of entire communities. Such an environment is clearly not conducive to peace, and it is likely that in a war of attrition, the weaker, less armed, and less well-organized herders will suffer the most.

The concept of security is perceived differently in RUGA. For the farmers, it is the need for the protection of crops and farming assets and the prevention of attacks. For the herders, there is a need for continued access to grazing lands and water and the prevention of abandoning this production due to attack or pressure from a third party (Drysdale, 2004). Due to the differences in sector goals, the two groups see each other as potential threats.

Challenges experienced by both farmers and herders as they attempt to negotiate peaceful intergroup relations and a set of possible solutions have been discussed above. Although the discussion has tried to provide insight into some key issues, it is essential to examine the issues of security concerns further. Galtung (1996:18) sees the subject of security as being related to peace. He defines peace as either a negative condition comprising the absence of direct, structural, or cultural violence or a positive condition resulting from equity and justice. Peacebuilding, therefore, is about the transformation from negative to positive peace.

8.10 Lessons Learned and Best Practices

The study makes a very strong case for the importance of local-level institutions as the best means of resolving farmer-herder conflicts. The fact that these are described as less divisive than national-level institutions is true, and they would certainly be a better way of rebalancing power that is currently perceived as being biased toward state policy benefiting sedentary farming communities. An example from one of the RUGA policy documents illustrates this, with it being stated that RUGA communities would benefit from setting up 'Joint Peace Committees' to resolve conflicts. This is something that could be quite easily achieved through facilitated discussion and perhaps

training of existing village and ward heads, and it would possibly bring about early success in an inclusive decision-making process for conflict resolution.

To answer the question of what needs to be done, the case study recommends several lessons learned and best practices. All these are aimed at laying better foundations for relationships of different kinds between the state and local people, between different groups of local people. The first recommendation is that all policies should be built on a scrupulous analysis and understanding of historical, social, economic, and political contexts. It gives examples of how things have gone wrong in the past through this not being done. This is all highly relevant to the case of RUGA because looking at the decisions for RUGA policy, the extent to which it takes account of the needs, desires, and fears of different groups of people, and the way conflicts may arise from it suggests that there has certainly not been ethnography-based policy making.

8.10.1 Building Trust and Communication Channels

Establishing trust between hostile groups is a formidable task in an environment characterised by hostility and competition. Starting small and treating each success as a building block, trust-building mechanisms can create a positive feedback cycle by transforming relationships in ways that encourage further cooperation. At the outset, impartial outside intervention creates an opportunity for cooperation by providing a neutral meeting ground and a goal that all parties can agree on, as demonstrated by the success of the conflict resolution workshops implemented by SFCG. To be successful, such interventions should be tied into a broader strategy for relationship and context transformation, such as livelihood projects that bring people together in activities with joint benefits and concurrent efforts to change policies that currently discriminate against one group and thus reinforce the status quo of competition and hostility.

At the micro-level in the interactions between individuals, contact theory has shown that positive interpersonal relations are the most effective way to transform inter-group attitudes and prejudices. This may be facilitated by structured interactions with goals of cooperation, such as joint problem-solving workshops or committees, or it may occur more organically during day-to-day collaboration on joint activities. While it is tempting to suggest that separating groups may be an effective way to reduce conflict, this approach is based on the false assumption that conflict is caused by our differences rather than our competition over differential access to resources. As

such, it is only through creating situations in which the groups must cooperate to achieve common goals that we can transform relationships and mitigate conflict. Measures such as bringing farmers and herders together to form resource user coalitions or councils can create forums for joint decision-making and joint rule-setting, and the formation of formal or informal agreements cements the obligations to cooperate and provides a framework for the enforcement of cooperative norms.

8.10.2. Inclusive Decision-Making Processes

The RUGA Research project provides a valuable inferential comment on inclusive decision-making among farmers and herders around the Benue state rural grazing settlements. One of the major findings of this research, based on the views of the farmers and herders, alluded to the fact that political elites from both groups, who often possess vested interests, manipulated decisions with regard to land use and resource allocation. At present, the interaction between farmers and herders is characterized by hostility and competition with regards to land and resources. Historical analyses detailing the intricate webs of pre-colonial and colonial administration are beyond the scope of this study.

Nonetheless, it is important to understand that past and current decision-making with regards to resource allocation by farmers and herders has been and still is subject to exploitation and manipulation by political elites. This has aggravated the situation between farmers and herders and has led to exclusive policies of resource allocation favouring the sedentary farming communities. An example reported by one of the farmers' focus groups was how the military regime divided grazing lands amongst the farming communities into blocks to be cultivated, and around the same period, the traditional ruling council sought to have their own separate land for grazing. Such decisions were invariably made without any form of consultation with the affected pastoral communities. The effect of this has been tremendous on the pastoral communities who feel that previous and existing land usage decisions have been unfairly imposed upon them, as expressed by one of the herder respondents when he described a lack of grazing land and no grazing routes for his cattle.

In light of previous decisions, there is an urgent need to facilitate entirely new types of decision-making processes which will ensure active participation, empowerment, and mutual agreement for

farmers and herders in situations where both groups are making decisions about the use of the same resources or when addressing each other's issues. This must be done in a manner which avoids elite manipulation and encourages grassroots-level initiatives. This will effectively aid the transition in intergroup relations from those of competition and hostility to cooperation and alliance. Changing patterns of decision-making should interlink with the broad conflict resolution strategies discussed in the subsequent section.

8.10.3. Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

It is difficult to see exactly what methods Nigerian herdsmen and farmers are taking to resolve their conflicts. Abdurahman's paper focuses primarily on the conflict itself instead of methods of resolving it. This indicates another issue: In many conflicts, the method of conflict resolution is not regarded as important; thus, greater measures are not taken to resolve the issue. However, we can assume that the process is like that outlined by Fritz (2020:70). The earlier tradition of pastoralists paying compensation to farmers may have been an informal way of resolving the issue. Any method involving mediation at the village head or chief level is likely to be a formal method. This is pure speculation, however, and a subject that would require a much deeper investigation.

Case studies from several different conflict areas have only just recently been studied to determine the specific methods used for conflict resolution. Jan Marie Fritz's study on the methods of conflict resolution used by non-governmental organizations in El Salvador gives us some insight into the topic. Fritz (2020:69) outlines the process of conflict resolution as having several different phases. First is a preventative measure which avoids the issues altogether. Unfortunately, in the real world, this does not always occur, and we move into the next stage, which is an informal process of handling the issue. Issues resolved at this level rarely resurface because of the personal nature of the solution. Again, not all conflicts can be resolved, so methods of resolution move to formal with the issue in question being resolved by an official authority. If all else fails, the problem is shelved for a later date, but ideally, it will be resolved with an agreement to reopen the discussion at a certain time.

8.11. Implications for Policy and Practice

The academic exercise of this thesis has several policy implications that can be useful to policymakers and those involved in peacebuilding. The study has shown that most of the conflict between farmers and herders occurs over rights to land access and claims of damage due to cattle herd destruction of crops. It is suggested, therefore, that any future attempts to address this issue must focus mainly on land-related issues rather than general development or just the accessibility of markets. The land issue cannot be solved by changing or enforcing laws, as often land ownership is decided by spending a certain amount of time occupying and using the land. This doesn't however mean that policy cannot be effective; in fact, one of the better ways to avoid conflict may be to create a policy of land zoning separation between farmers and herders. A simple and effective method of doing this would be to introduce several grass banks in which herders may purchase the right to use an allocation of land by paying a fee in the form of stored hay, which can then be recovered during times of drought. If the policy is implemented effectively on public land, it would be very clear to identify the zones, and since the fuelled conflict to gain access to land is often more severe than the actual behaviour of crop destruction, it could well become self-enforcing.

The RUGA initiative could also be evaluated to make it more effective. From the very limited literature available on RUGA, it is suggested that the initiative was created to solve a similar land access issue between cattle herders and other people by providing land allocations specifically for pastoralist use. The more recent form of RUGA, as discussed in the introduction, has been proposed in various states as a direct solution to farmer-herder violence. The inconsistency between the two ideas of RUGA would suggest that there is in fact no clear policy of land separation, and it has only caused more conflict due to unclear allocation and forced entry of herders to land that isn't part of the initiative.

8.11.1. Policy Recommendations

Economic changes are needed to break the situation of interdependence and exploitative relationships between the groups without causing further economic hardship to either group. This will be a long-term process, but it needs to begin with measures that give greater control of land resources to the sedentary groups. Simulation and workshops have proved effective methodologies

for facilitating dialogue and problem-solving between conflicting groups, and these require support and resources from policymakers. The involvement of neutral third parties has often proved essential in mitigating conflicts and building peace. This requires a certain level of security to be in place, and often, the presence of such parties may itself be a cause of contention between conflicting groups.

Policy recommendations suggest a shift from a statist model of governance to one which is more inclusive, respectful, and consensual. It is suggested that the government of Benue State align itself with the aspirations of Tiv and Idoma farmers and herders, being aware of the differing power relationships between the groups and seeking to find solutions to their problems that they find acceptable. It is understood that this may take some time. Policy should avoid exacerbating present conflicts and seek to rehabilitate the most affected areas first. A fundamental policy concern should be the regeneration of intergroup trust, and measures that enable this, such as integrated schools and income-generating projects involving both groups, are to be encouraged.

8.11.2. Practical Guidelines for Peacebuilding Actors

The second point is the need for careful and measured interventions to address underlying causes of conflict rather than mere symptoms. Factors such as access to land, water, and other resources, as well as identity and security, have been identified as critical issues underlying farmer-herder conflicts. However, it is likely that attempting to address these issues head-on will provoke further conflict due to the sensitivity of these issues and the divergent interests of farmers and herders. Under conditions of mistrust and hostility, open negotiations over resource sharing are unlikely to be productive. Steps to build trust: governments and third-party interventions are familiar with rushed initiatives to mediate and reconcile conflicting parties in each area to legitimise state interventions or projects. Such initiatives are invariably aimed at securing a quick fix to conflicts that are seen to be in the interest of governments. They are characterised by a bias towards the objectives of the intervener, an inadequate understanding of the causes of the conflict and local needs, and a lack of consultation with the conflicting parties. This can lead to further resentment, and conflicts may be exacerbated. Therefore, the third point is that there is a need for slow interventions that require a degree of pressure on both conflicting parties and the state over the long term.

An analysis of the conflict has led to a series of practical guidelines for peacebuilding interventions. The first and most fundamental point is the need for a thorough understanding of the complexity of farmer-herder relations and conflicts in specific areas as a basis for the design of appropriate interventions. As stated above, simplistic assumptions linking environmental degradation with increased farmer-herder conflict can be misleading and potentially counterproductive. There are no universal solutions to farmer-herder conflicts, and interventions designed for one area are not guaranteed to work in another. It is essential to understand the specific causes of conflict and the needs and perceptions of the different groups involved. Axiomatically, the involvement of in-depth research with the participation of the groups involved should be the starting point for peacebuilding initiatives.

8.12 Chapter Conclusion

Reconciling warring herders and farmers in Benue State requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the root causes of the conflict. By leveraging community dialogue, conflict resolution training, sustainable land use planning, economic empowerment, security sector reform, and educational initiatives, stakeholders can build a foundation for lasting peace. The collaboration between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local communities is crucial for the successful implementation of these peacebuilding resources.

CHAPTER NINE:
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND
RECOMMENDATION

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings of the study on the nature and dynamics of conflicts between herders and farmers in rural grazing communities in Benue State are discussed. The role of environmental changes, cultural, religious, and economic factors in inciting violence and building cooperation between these groups are examined. Additionally, peacebuilding resources for reconciling the warring herders and farmers are explored.

9.2 Discussion of Findings

1. **Nature and Dynamics of Conflicts:** The conflicts between herders and farmers in Benue State exhibit a multifaceted nature influenced by various factors. According to Lederach (1997:18), conflicts often emerge from underlying structural issues, such as competition for resources and historical grievances. In this case, the competition for land and water resources serves as a primary driver of conflict, as noted by Galtung (1969:182), who identified resource scarcity as a key cause of violence. Moreover, the conflicts are exacerbated by ethnic tensions, as described by Burton (1990:99), who emphasized the role of identity in fueling intergroup conflicts. The presence of external factors, such as politicians and criminal elements, further perpetuates the cycle of violence, as highlighted by Kriesberg (2009:21), who discussed the impact of third-party intervention on conflict escalation.
2. **Roles of Environmental Changes:** Environmental changes, including climate-induced land degradation and diminishing water sources, significantly influence the dynamics of conflicts between herders and farmers. This aligns with the environmental conflict theory proposed by Homer-Dixon (1994:32), which posits that environmental scarcity can lead to violent confrontations. As resources become scarcer, competition intensifies, as discussed by Gleditsch (1998:392), who emphasized the role of resource competition in driving conflicts. Furthermore, the unpredictable weather patterns exacerbate the vulnerability of

both groups, as suggested by Barnett (2003:15), who highlighted the impact of climate change on conflict dynamics.

3. **Cultural, Religious, and Economic Factors:** Cultural and religious differences contribute to the escalation of conflicts between herders and farmers, as noted by Coleman et al. (2006), who emphasized the role of identity in shaping intergroup relations. Economic disparities also play a significant role, with farmers perceiving herders as encroaching on their livelihoods, while herders view farming activities as a threat to their traditional way of life. This aligns with the social identity theory proposed by Tajfel (1979:45), which suggests that group identities shape intergroup behaviors and attitudes. Moreover, the manipulation of ethnic and religious identities by external actors exacerbates existing tensions, as discussed by Mitchell (1991), who highlighted the role of identity politics in conflict escalation.
4. **Peacebuilding Resources:** Despite the conflicts' entrenched nature, several peacebuilding resources can be leveraged to reconcile warring herders and farmers in Benue State. Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, such as mediation by community leaders and elders, can help facilitate dialogue and promote reconciliation, as suggested by Fisher et al. (2000:24). Civil society organizations and international agencies can also play a vital role in peacebuilding efforts by providing mediation support and facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties, as discussed by Ramsbotham et al. (2011:76). Additionally, initiatives aimed at promoting intergroup dialogue and addressing the root causes of the conflicts are essential for sustainable peacebuilding efforts, as emphasized by Bar-Tal (2000), who highlighted the importance of addressing underlying grievances in conflict resolution processes.

9.3 Summary of Major Findings

The study has uncovered the intricate and multifaceted nature of conflicts between herders and farmers in Benue State. It has underscored the significant role played by environmental changes, cultural, religious, and economic factors in exacerbating tensions between the two groups. The findings have illuminated the complexities involved in these conflicts, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding of the underlying drivers.

Despite the challenges posed by these conflicts, the study has identified opportunities for peacebuilding and reconciliation. By leveraging existing resources and implementing targeted interventions, there is potential to mitigate the conflicts and foster sustainable peace in rural grazing communities. Through strategic interventions and collaborative efforts, it is possible to address the root causes of the conflicts and promote harmony among herders and farmers.

9.4 Conclusion

From the foregoing, the study concluded that there are reasons that influence the migration of Fulani people from different parts of the core North to the north-central and downward south. These reasons serve as push and pull factors that precipitate their migration to this region. The study also concluded that multiple causes exist that influence the intergroup conflict between Fulani and the indigenous Tiv farmers in Benue State. In addition, it was established in the study that crop destruction is the major cause of intergroup conflict, as expressed by many participants. The study concluded that the establishment of a Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) can be useful to reduce intergroup conflict to the lowest level but will not eliminate it completely. Also, the study concluded that climate change has a major influence on herder/farmer violence in Nigeria as it triggered the migration of Fulani towards southern parts of the country. Conflicts usually ensue as they move and graze over farmlands.

This study has demonstrated that the process of establishing peace through the intervention of the government can no longer rely on the utilization of violent methods that were passed down from the colonial era and military period. This study has determined that a comprehensive approach will be required from the government to resolve the conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria. The study theoretically concluded that the ongoing conflicts in Nigeria are influenced by both the nature and character of the Nigerian State. The study also discovered that the abrupt and significant alterations in the environment in certain regions of Nigeria, as elucidated by the EcoViolence model, are responsible for the sudden migration of herders from the North to the Southern areas of the country, hence exacerbating hostilities.

According to this study, the resolution of herder-farmer conflicts in the long run would rely on implementing infrastructure for "strategic sustainable peace-building" as proposed by Lederach.

This approach aims to protect the rights of all parties involved and ensure their well-being. Ensuring a future that can be maintained or continued without causing harm to the environment or depleting natural resources. The current Federal Government of Nigeria's National Livestock Transformation Plan 2019-2028 exemplifies Lederach's Peace-building Infrastructure. However, it is crucial for the Nigerian government to actively engage key stakeholders in the policy's implementation. This includes establishing peace through the media and closely monitoring the progress made by relevant government agencies. The crucial importance of the Federal and State Governments in putting an end to the violence in this matter cannot be overstated. This study has shown that the implementation of important policies, such as the development of ranches through reconciliation, has a significant impact on the RUGA program in Nigeria.

Based on this conclusion, the study recommends that there should be an effective emergency management intervention plan that will make the environmental conditions of the Fulani source region comfortable for them and their cattle. This will reduce the level of their migration to other regions because, as found in this study, there are push and pull factors that influence their migration to parts of Nigeria, especially the southwestern region.

In conclusion, the conflicts between herders and farmers in Benue State are deeply entrenched in a complex web of socio-economic, environmental, and cultural factors. These conflicts cannot be addressed through simplistic solutions but require a comprehensive and holistic approach. Sustainable peace can be achieved by acknowledging and addressing the underlying drivers of the conflicts, such as competition for resources and historical grievances.

Furthermore, it is essential to recognize the agency of both herders and farmers in shaping the dynamics of conflict and peace. Empowering communities to participate in decision-making processes and facilitating dialogue and cooperation are crucial steps towards conflict resolution and reconciliation. By fostering mutual understanding and respect, sustainable peace can be cultivated in rural grazing communities, paving the way for inclusive development and social cohesion.

9.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms:** Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms have been shown to be effective in mediating disputes between herders and farmers. Therefore, it is recommended that these mechanisms be bolstered by providing training and capacity-building for community leaders and elders. This includes equipping them with conflict resolution skills and techniques to facilitate dialogue and negotiation processes effectively.
2. **Promote Sustainable Land and Resource Management:** Policies aimed at promoting sustainable land and resource management practices are essential to mitigate competition between herders and farmers. This can be achieved through the implementation of land use planning regulations, zoning policies, and resource allocation mechanisms that consider the needs of both groups. Additionally, incentivizing sustainable farming and pastoral practices can help reduce pressure on land and natural resources. Additionally, the clear demarcation and zoning of lands for agricultural activities and animal husbandry is something that should be taken into consideration. Also, there is a requirement for the education of farmers, herders, and local people on methods of coexistence and the peaceful resolution of differences. In the same vein, there is a need for education on the economic benefits of cattle to the entire community to build coexistence between farmer communities and herders and their cattle. The International Transhumance Certificate (ITC) was enacted by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1998 with the intention of easing the movement of cattle across international borders to West African states. There is a great deal of difficulty in putting the law into effect after it has been in effect for almost twenty years. The law needs to be revised to guarantee that it will function correctly. The resolution of issues such as conflicts between farmers and herders, access to land, and the forcible displacement of pastoralists in several West African countries all fall under this category.
3. **Invest in Educational and Awareness Programmes:** Educational and awareness programmes play a crucial role in promoting intergroup understanding and tolerance. It is

recommended to invest in initiatives that educate both herders and farmers about each other's livelihoods, cultures, and perspectives. This can help dispel stereotypes, reduce prejudice, and foster empathy and cooperation between the two groups. Moreover, promoting education and literacy among rural communities can empower individuals to resolve conflicts peacefully and participate effectively in decision-making processes. The study also proposes that the government should provide quality education to the youths in the region, particularly the Fulani youths. This would help them have exposure to know what is right and wrong, good, and bad, and what is acceptable and criminal in the society. Because young people are the primary perpetrators of violence, it is essential that jobs are made available to young people of both the Fulani and indigenous people of Benue communities. This will ensure that they remain engaged and occupied. Increasing work opportunities at various levels could alleviate the high unemployment rate, which is contributing to the involvement of young people in inciting conflicts. If the young people were employed, they would not heed the harmful requests of self-serving farmers and herdsman to engage in conflict.

4. **Enhance Collaboration Between Stakeholders and Major Actors:** Collaboration helps foster trust, confidence, and mutual understanding among individuals. A direct collaboration approach between farmers and herders is suggested to resolve the problem. Collaborating and living together increases the likelihood of establishing personal friendship and mutual respect compared to those who do not. This can be done by encouraging the Chief-in-Council mechanism at clan and district levels and appealing to the supreme traditional councils, led by the Tor Tiv in Tiv-speaking communities and the Ochi-Idoma in Idoma-speaking communities, to collaborate with pastoralists (Fulani) to resolve differences through constructive dialogue and sharing common of projects. In the same vein, collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations, and international partners is essential to support peacebuilding initiatives in rural grazing communities. It is recommended that multi-stakeholder platforms and coordination mechanisms be established to facilitate information sharing, resource mobilization, and joint action. This includes creating partnerships for the provision of conflict resolution services, livelihood support programs, and infrastructure development projects that benefit both herders and farmers.

5. The study also recommends that the government recruit physically and intellectually competent men to reinforce existing law enforcement agents, and adequate training on security strategies should be given to them on how to curb criminal activities and prevent external aggression. The government should also arm the security personnel with enough weapons to ensure that they operate effectively on “No retreat, no surrender” measures to overcome any threat. Importantly, the government should encourage them by giving them enough salaries and other allowances to make them shun all forms of corruption and carry out their duties with commitment and diligence across the country.

9.6 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

One limitation of this study is its focus on rural grazing communities in Benue State, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Future research could benefit from conducting comparative studies across different regions and contexts to gain a broader understanding of herder-farmer conflicts. Additionally, the reliance on qualitative data in this study highlights the need for further research employing mixed method approaches to enhance the robustness of the findings. Moreover, exploring the role of gender dynamics in herder-farmer conflicts and evaluating the impact of specific interventions on peacebuilding outcomes are areas that warrant further investigation.

Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the complexities of conflicts between herders and farmers and offers practical recommendations for promoting peace and reconciliation in rural grazing communities.

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Appendix 1: Focus Group Discussion Guide

Research Question 1: *Nature and dynamics of Herders and farmers' conflicts*

1. What have been the relations between herders and farmers in the community?
2. What are the main drivers of the conflict between herders and farmers in your community?
3. What have been the patterns and nature of the conflict between herders and farmers?

Research Question 2: *Role of environmental changes, land and water resources on the dynamics of conflicts and cooperative relations*

4. How is access to water and land related to the conflicts?
5. What is the level of migration of the Fulani herders (discuss the reasons for their migration, types of migration that Fulani herders undertake as well as the routes of their migration?)
6. How have the climatic and environmental changes influenced the conflicts between herders and farmers in your community?
7. How does the conflict between farmers and Fulani herders escalate into violence?

Research Question 3: *Role of cultural, religious and economic factors in violence cooperation*

8. How has the differences customs and culture influenced the escalation of the conflict between herders and farmers in your community
 9. How has religion influenced the escalation of the conflict between herders and farmers in your community?
 10. How has local politics influenced the escalation of the conflict between herders and farmers in your community?
 11. How does group groups mobilization influence or affects conflict escalation between the
 12. What is the nature of cooperation between farmers and Fulani herders?
 13. What are the reasons for cooperation between farmers and Fulani herders?
 14. What are the differences in cooperation between farmers and herders in peaceful areas as compared to farmers and herders in conflict/violent areas in Benue state?
- How does land tenure or access right affect conflicts between farmers and Fulani

Focus Group Discussion Guide (Fulfulde Translation)

JYAMOL BEDDUKI FAMU 1: none e dudukilurral/kabehakkundewainabe e remobe

- Ko wonialakahakkundewainabe e remobe e gellemon?
- dumhundejidiye buri waddukilurralhakkunderemobe e wainabe e gellemon?
- Noyeyanayi ko sifalurral ko kabepe'ootode e gellemodonna'i?

JYAMOL BEDDUKI FAMU 2: tasirumbattudifellere ko mardileddi e ndiyam e doududukilurral ko narralhakkunde

- Noyeatalhebkindiyam ko leddimardialaka e lurral?
- Noyedudoraleggukifulbewainabe (mbolwon e dousabbuji,egguki, kala eggukifulbengatta e ate de be tokkata to be eggowai)
- Banoyewattitakiyanayi e babalmarditasiruharofe'aakilurralhakkunderemobe e wainabe e gellemon?
- No lurralhakkunderemobe e fulbewainabelakkitortowartaure?

JYAMOL BEDDUKI FAMU 3: tasiru ko adiji e dina e mardipodata e kabendernarral

- No ferotironndirre e adimballitirtaharohebkilurralhakkundewainabe e durobe e gellemon?
- No dinabomarditasiru e douhebkilurralhakkundewainabe e remobe e gallemon?
- No siyasawurobomartitasiru e doulurralhakkundewainabe e remobe e gellemon?
- No shanimobtukiyimbe e ungiyajiboharotasiru ko shafortohebakilurralhakkunde (remobe e wainabe e gellemon?)
- Noyeyanayikautalhorebohakkunderemobe e fulbewainabe?
- Ko wonisabbukautalhorehakkunderemobe e Fulbe wainabe?
- Ko wonifaferotiro e doukautalhorehakkunderemobe e wainabe e shanijonde jam ta fondidum e pellemardekabe-kabehakkunderemobe e wainabe e nderJiha Benue
- No markileddi ko hakkehebkindimarditasiru e doulurralhakkunderemobe e Fulbe wainabe (mboldon e douhakkemarki ko hebkiiledi)

**JYAMOL BEDDUKI FAMU 4: hundeji ko mahatajonde-jam
ngamsulhuntakipe'ootodihakkundewainabe e remobe**

- Ko woni wallondekuhumawaleddi e ngajihaharomagukilurralhakkundeummatotedidi den?
- Dum mushkilajidiyewonimaudi ko yewatakokarihukumaharosulhuntakilurral?
- Dum iri ate deye mara harokautalhorendenbo no dumjogorto de ngammahukijonde jam hakkunde?
- No dumnasdirtaungiyajidiyeharohekisulhukabepe'ooto de?
- E yikima no dummagirtalurralji/kabe-kabede'e?

Focus Group Discussion Guide (Tiv Translation)

Research Question 1: (mpin u hiihii) Mlu u zayol u Mbakuranibuwa man mbasulev

1. Mtemmiongo u Fulani man shimbakahansulengunena hen ijir ne?
2. Ka nyiatooikyaa a nevezayol ne alu been ga?
3. Mlu u num ne ngunena. ka I wuaior shin ka I er nena?

Research Question 2: (mpin u sha uhar) mlu u ajir aenhemban cii je yo, mlu u nya man shimgerem sha kwagh u ayoosu ne ngunena.

4. Mlu u nya man shimgerem sha zayol ne ngunena?
5. Mlu u zende u mbakuranibuwa man atooikyaa a zende ken ka nyi?
6. Mban u nya I kahansule man mgerem sha zayol ne ngunena?
7. Ka nyi man zayol ne I nyor sha iyaven ne?

Research Question 3: (mpin u sha utar) mlu u aeren aa tyo, mchivir u Aondo man nyaregh sha ayoosu ne ka nena

8. M kposo sha aeren aa tyoiTiv man shimbakuranibuwa seer u nan mzehehen sha ayoosu ne?
9. U hen we mba m pav asev sha mchivir u Aondo man shimbakuranibuwakpa seer mzehehen u zayol ne?
10. Manmlu u party u eren sha ayoosungunena?
11. U hen we mbamzooasevmbagenevkpave seer zayol sha ayoosu ne?
12. Mlu u ijorzwa hen Fulani man mbasulevngunena?
13. Atookyaanga aa u nenge we doo u mbasulev man Fulani vertemakebem er?
14.
15. Mlu u I nya I kahankwagh sha zayol ne ngunena?

Research Question 4: (mpin u sha uyiin) I gbinda I van a bem hen ato u Fulani man shimbasulev

16. Er tom u gomneti u shin tine man shi u the Benue State ngunena sha mbamhenmba
been a ayoosu ne?
17. Ka nyiiluzayol u gomneti sha u nongon been aayoosu ne?
18. Er tom u ator sha u been aayoosungunena?
19. We u hen we a er nena man zayol ne u ne bee?

Appendix 2 : Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Religious Leaders in Benue State
Background data

1. Where the Fulani herders in your community come from?
2. Are there other herders' aside Fulani ethnic groups in or around your community?
3. What kind of relationship does your community have with the Fulani herders?
4. What are the major migratory routes of the herders to your community?

Examine the nature and dynamics of herders and farmers conflicts in rural grazing communities in Benue State

5. What is the nature of Fulani settlement in your community? Sedentary or nomadic?
6. Can you trace the history of herders and farmers in your community?
7. What types of conflicts mostly occur between the herders and farmers in your community?
8. What has been the nature of conflict that exists between Fulani herders and framers and what has changed about the conflict recently?
9. How frequent is the conflict between herders and farmers in your community?
10. What do you think is responsible for frequency in conflict?
11. Can you cite any violent clashes between the herders and farmers in the last five years?
12. Are there intra herders' clashes? How and why?
13. What is the role of the government (Federal and State) in the conflict?
14. How has local politics affected or contributed to the conflict?
15. How has religion affected or contributed the conflict?
16. How has group mobilization escalated the violence between herders and farmers in your community?

Investigate the role of environmental changes, land and water resources on the dynamics of conflicts and cooperative relations among herders and farmers in rural grazing communities in Benue State

17. In your own opinion, what has been the form of migration to your community by herders is it forced, induced or voluntary?
18. What do you think is the major reason for the migration of the Fulani herders to your area?
19. What is the customary belief on water and land ownership in your community?
20. What do you understand about climate or environmental changes and how has it affected your community?

21. How are the recent environmental changes affecting the use of resources such as land, water, and pasture?
22. How has climatic/environmental change or resources scarcity contributed or increased the cause of conflict between farmers and Fulani herders?
23. How are farmers and herders adapting to these environmental changes?

To examine the role of cultural, religious and economic factors in triggering violence or cooperation between herders and farmers in rural grazing areas.

24. What are the customary differences on land ownerships or access to land responsible for the escalation of crises between herders and farmers in your community??
25. What is the mode of landownership or access to land in your community?
26. Is there sacred land that should not have been accessed by non-indigenes or fulani herders?
27. What has been the role of cultural and religious activities between the two groups in escalating or managing the conflict ?
28. What is the nature/ways of cooperation between farmers and Fulani herders?
29. How has religion been used in the cooperative use use of resources (water, land, and pasture) between herders and farmers ?
30. What are the modes of cooperation between herders and farmers and Fulani herders during conflicts, including violent conflict? How and why is there cooperation in times of conflict?
31. What are the differences in cooperation between farmers and herders in peaceful areas as compared to farmers and herders in conflict/violent areas?
32. How do the two groups customarily deal with conflicts?
33. Can you Identify elements of religious neighbourhood I that can n communities?

Explore the peacebuilding resources for reconciling the warring herders and farmers in Benue State

34. What are the modes of conflict resolution between farmers and herders in your community? How effective are these measures?
35. How does the religious differences between the herders and farmers generally affect or influence farmer-peacebuilding in your community?
36. How can religion be annexed to build a positive intergroup relation between herders and farmers?

37. What are the interventional roles of religious leaders in managing the conflicts?
38. What have been the roles of the Federal and State governments in managing the conflicts religiously?
39. What do you think can be done to effectively resolve conflicts between farmers and herders and promote cooperation among them?

Semi-structured interview guide for Religious Leaders in Benue State (Fulfulde Translation)

Background data

- To Fulbe wainabe be gellemonjyipti?
- WodiwainabewobbenabandalenyolFulde e ndergellemon ko e sera mon?
- Dum irialakadumewonihakkundeyimbemon e Fulbe wainabe?
- Dum ate deye Fulbe wainabe buri jyiptirioki to ngartaigellemon?

Ndaranone e dudukife'aakilurral/kabehakkundewainabe e remobe e gellejimardipelledurngol e Jiha Benue

- Dum iri bale deyefulbenjodi e gellemon? Be Jodibena ko be wancobe?
- Asiptoraitarihiremobe e wainabe e gellemon? (**fe'aakilurral/haurehakkunderemobe e wainabe???**)
- Noye none lurral/kabe ko buri fe'akkihakkundewainabe e remobe?
- Noyelurral ko fe'ootohakkunde Fulbe wainabe e remobe den nga'uno? Den bo ko wonimbattudi e none lurral/kabe den ko badi doo?
- Noyedudukife'aakikabekabehakkundewainabe e durobe e gellemon?
- Dun dumengi'atafodatadudukufea'akikabe-kabe den?
- Dagadubijoyishalidi, a siptoraihaure ko fe'i'hakkundewainabe e remobe?
- Ko woodikaure/lurralhakkundewainabe? No dumwaari? Ndenbo ko foodinde?
- Dumewoniwallondehukuma (leddi ko bojiha) e nderkabe-kabe ko pe'ooto?
- Noyeardungalsiyasagelleshafori ko mballiti e fe'aakikabe den?
- Noyetasirudinashafori ko wallirife'aakilurral ko kabe?
- Noyeshanimobgalyimbe e ungiyajiboharotasiru ko shafortohebakilurralhakkunderemobe e wainabe e gellemon?)

Tinya/linyaedouwattitakiyanayi, e mardileddi e ndiyamdoufe'aakikabe e narral/kautalhorehakkundewainabe e remobendergureji/pellendurngol e Jiha Benue

- E yiki ma, dumirieggu dunduyewainabengadifakigellemodon? dumdoldekina ko suuneki ko bodum e yiddemabbe tan?
- E yiki ma, ko won dalilamaudumnder ko foodata Fulbe wainabeeggoitangartagellemodon?
- Dumewoninuddirremodon e doumarukindiyam ko leddi e gellemon?
- Ko keptuda e dou ko dumwi'atawattitakiyanayi? Den bonoyedumshaforigellemodon?
- Ekobadi doo, noyewattitakiyanayishaforihutinirkijaudi/mardi ko nandibanoladdi ko ndiyam ko pelledurngol?
- No wattitakiyanayi ko famdutukijaudiwalliti ko beddukife'aakikabe-kabehakkunderemobe e Fulbe wainabe?
- Noyeremobe e wainabembowirtawattitakiyanayijifellere din?

Tinya/linya ko al'adaji ko Dina ko yanayirisku e dousabbukilurral/kabe ko bonarralhakkundewainabe e remobe e nderpelledurngol

- E gellemodon, ko woniferotiroadijimarkileddi ko bohebkindiwallataharoumminkikabehakkundewainabe e remobe?
- No dumwattadum mara/hebaleddi ko bodumhebirtandi e gellemodon?
- wodileddi/felleresenindendehobbe kobo Fulbe wainabenjottatako?
- Dum irinwallondendeyekungiyajiadi ko di dinandokkataharoumminki ko so'uukilurral/kabe?
- Dum iri none/ate deye mara ko hautatahorewainabe e remobe?
- Ba noyedumhutiniirtadinaharohautukihorengamnaftorakijaudi (banonndiyam ko leddi ko pelledurngol) hakkunderemobe e wainabe?
- Dum iri ate deyedumhuratangamhautukihoreremobe e Fulbe wainabe?
- Dum irikautalngaledummarihakkundewainabe e remobe e fulbedurobewakkatilurral, haelurralhaure? Ndenoyenoyebodumwari hard um hebikautalhorewakkatilurral?
- Ko won ferotiro e doukautalhorehakkunderemobe e wainabe e gellejodibe jam ta fondibe epelledumrellijonde jam hakkunderemobe e wainabe?
- No bangarejedidi din fu be mbowiso'iirki/magirkilurralhakkunde?
- A hollai e Dina maritasiru e heddobe..... not clearly stated

HebtoiHundeji ko mahatajonde-jam ngamsulhuntakiwainabe e remobe e nderJiha Benue

- Dum iri ate deyedumhurataharosulhuntakilurralhakkunderemobe e wainabe e gellemon?
No ate den marditasiru?
- Ba noyelurraldinajimballitirta ko marditasiru e doudemowo- mahukijonde- jam e gellemon?
- No dumhuratadinangamwaddukinarralhakkunderemobe e wainabe?
- Ko woniwallondeardibe Dina e haro so''uukilurral/kabe
- Ko numatawadetengammagukilurral/kabehakkunderemobe e wainabendembowaddiki/beddakautalhorehakkunde ma

Semi-structured interview guide for Religious Leaders in Benue State (Tiv Translation)

(MBA-MPIN SHA A CI U MBAHEMEN MBA KRISTU HEN KPEN TAR U BENUE)

Background data

1. Fulani mbavelu hen tar wen ne, ka hanvedugh man vevaluaven?
2. Dugh Fulani sha yo, iormbagenevkpambakuranibuwa he ipyaven tar ne?
3. Mzoo u tyo ne ver Fulani ngunena?
4. Igbindave I karan man shinyorunkekpentar u Benue ka hana?

Mbamnenge sha mlu u MbakuranIbuwa, shi yan toho ken agar a kekpen tar u Benue State

5. Mtem u Fulani he tarwoungunena? Vetemake gar shin mbazenden yan toho?
6. U fatyo u umburyiase u Fulani vevatema he tar ne?
7. Ka nyizayol ka I hembalun hen ato u Mbakuranibuwa man shimbakahansule?
8. Manayoosu ne ngalu sha nyigbenda? Ka I lu sha zwa shin ka I lu sha gbuuka?
9. Zayol u num ne ka a lufesefese?
10. Man ka nyi I ne venum ne hingirfesefese?
11. U fatyo u umber ngyer I num u inongokeyomataan aa karenkejime?
12. Zayol ne ka sha mbasulevtsee shin veayolavekpa ka venongonnum?
13. Ertom u gomneti u shin tine man kpen tar u Benue ngunena?
14. U hen we zayol u party kpangu sha num ne?
15. U hen we mlu u kwaghAondokpa seer zayol sha num ne?
16. U hen we mbamzooasevmbagenevkvave seer zayol sha ayoosu ne?

Mker sha iyaven I mba u ura, nya I dedoo I kahansule man shimban u mgerem ma man kuwamba u ijoorzwa hen mbakuranbyuwa man shimbasurev ken kpen tar u Benue State.

17. U hen we m nyor u mbakuranibuwake Benue State ka kebem shin ka shaager?
18. Tindi u tyo sha kwagh u mgerem man shinyangunena he tarwou?
19. Mfewou sha kwagh u mban u ura noon man shi m kpe u yiavngunena?
20. Kwagh u mbanura noon na u zayolnena sha mlu u sulekahan?
21. U hen we zayol u mban u ura noon ne seer ayoosu aa Fulani man shimbasulev er?
22. Er zayol a lunahan, mabasulev man shimbaagbidyegboughmbaerennena?

Mnenge u sha mlu u akaaty, kwaghaondo man shikpenga sha m seer u ayoosu aa mbakuranibuwa man mbakahansule.

23. Mnenge u tyo sha u vendazendedaandaan aa Fulani seer ayoosu hen tar u Benue State er?
24. Ka nyigbenda or nan fatyo u lun a nya hen Benue State, shierenkwagh her?
25. Ajirnga aa I doo u or uke nana fatyo u za lun her ga?
26. M er tom u tyo man mzoo u mbakwaghaondo sha m bee u zayol ne ngunena?
27. Mlu u ijorzwa hen Fulani man mbasulevngunena?
28. Mbahemenevmbakwaghaondonaiwasen hen mbasulev man Fulani sha mlu u zwan aa mgerem man nyanena?
29. Mbasulev man shi Fulani mbaerennena u been ayoosu ne?

Aaven aa van a bem man ijorzwa hen ato u mbakuranibuwa man mbasulev ken kpen tar u Benue State

34. Mbamhenmba been aayoosu ne nganena? Manshive wase nena?
35. U nenge we mbampavasev sha gbenda u m chivir u Aondokpa seer zayol u num ne?
36. U hen we mzoo u mimi u mbakristu man shimbamusulumi a fatyo u van a bem er?
37. gadia a er nena man mbahemenevmbachiviraondove a bee num ne?

38. M nongo u gomneti u shin tine man shi u he Benue State ngunena sha mbamhenmba been a ayoosu ne?
39. Na se mbamhenov sha gbenda u been a zayol ne?
40. Er tom u ator sha u been aayoosungunena?
41. Er Tindi sha zayol u num u Fulani man shimbasulevhe Benue State?

Appendix 3: Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Traditional Rulers in Benue State
Background data

1. Do the community members engage in subsistence or commercial farming?
2. Where the Fulani herders in your community do comes from?
3. Are there other herders' aside Fulani ethnic groups in or around your community?
4. What kind of relationship does your community have with the Fulani herders?
5. What are the major migratory routes of the herders to your community?

Examine the nature and dynamics of herders and farmers conflicts in rural grazing communities in Benue State

6. What is the nature of Fulani settlement in your community? Sedentary or nomadic?
7. How frequent are Fulani herders' migrations to your community? From where?
8. Can you trace the history of herders and farmers in your community?
9. What types of conflicts mostly occur between the herders and farmers in your community?
10. What has been the nature of conflict that exists between Fulani herders and framers and what has changed about the conflict recently?
11. How frequent is the conflict between herders and farmers in your community?
12. What do you think is responsible for frequency in conflict?
13. Can you cite any violent clashes between the herders and farmers in the last five years?
14. Are there intra herders' clashes? How and why?
15. What is the role of the government (Federal and State) in the conflict?
16. How has local politics affected or contributed to the conflict?
17. How has religion affected or contributed the conflict?
18. How has group mobilization escalated the violence between herders and farmers in your community?

Investigate the role of environmental changes, land and water resources on the dynamics of conflicts and cooperative relations among herders and farmers in rural grazing communities in Benue State

19. In your own opinion, what has been the form of migration to your community by herders is it forced, induced or voluntary?
20. What do you think is the major reason for the migration of the Fulani herders to your area?
21. What is the customary belief on water and land ownership in your community?

22. What do you understand about climate or environmental changes and how has it affected your community?
23. How are the recent environmental changes affecting the use of resources such as land, water, and pasture?
24. How has climatic/environmental change or resources scarcity contributed or increased the cause of conflict between farmers and Fulani herders?
25. How are farmers and herders adapting to these environmental changes? (Probe how adaptation to environmental changes is influencing conflicts)

To examine the role of cultural, religious and economic factors in triggering violence or cooperation between herders and farmers in rural grazing areas.

26. What are the customary differences on land ownerships or access to land responsible for the escalation of crises between herders and farmers in your community??
27. What is the mode of landownership or access to land in your community?
28. Are there sacred land that should not have been accessed by non-indigenes or fulani herders?
29. What has been the role of cultural and religious activities between the two groups in escalating or managing the conflict ?
30. What are the economic effects of the conflicts to both farmers and herders?
31. What is the nature/ways of cooperation between farmers and Fulani herders?
32. How are farmers and Fulani herders cooperating in the use of resources (water, land and pasture)?
33. What are the modes of cooperation between herders and farmers and Fulani herders during conflicts, including violent conflict? How and why is there cooperation in times of conflict?
34. What are the differences in cooperation between farmers and herders in peaceful areas as compared to farmers and herders in conflict/violent areas?
35. How do the two groups customarily deal with conflicts?
36. Can you Identify elements of cultural neighbourhood in communities?

Explore the peacebuilding resources for reconciling the warring herders and farmers in Benue State

37. What are the modes of conflict resolution between farmers and herders in your community? How effective are these measures?

38. How does the socio-cultural ties between herders and farmers generally affect or influence farmer-peacebuilding in your community?
39. What are the existing national policies to address the escalation of farmer-Fulani conflicts and ensure peaceful coexistence between the two groups?
40. What are the interventional roles of traditional leaders in managing the conflicts?
41. What have been the roles of the Federal and State governments in managing the conflicts through traditional rulers?
42. What do you think can be done to effectively resolve conflicts between farmers and herders and promote cooperation among them?

Semi-structured interview guide for Religious Leaders in Benue State (Tiv Translation)
(MBA-MPIN SHA A CIU ATOR HEN KPEN TAR U BENUE)

Background data

1. Ka nyi tom sule ne kahan? Ka akaa yan shin ka ateen?
2. Fulani mbavelu hen tar wen ne, ka hanvedugh man vevaluaven?
3. Dugh Fulani sha yo, iormbagenevkpambakuranibuwa he ipyaven tar ne?
4. Mzoo u tyo ne ver Fulani ngunena?
5. Igbindave I karan man shinyorunkekpentar u Benue ka hana?

Mbamnenge sha mlu u MbakuranIbuwa,shiyani toho ken agar a kekpen tar u Benue State

6. Mtem u Fulani he tarwoungunena? Vetemake gar shin mbazenden yan toho?
7. U fatyo u umburyiase u Fulani vevatema he tar ne?
8. Ka nyizayol ka I hembalun hen ato u Mbakuranibuwa man shimbakahansule?
9. Manayoosu ne ngalu sha nyigbenda? Ka I lu sha zwa shin ka I lu sha gbuuka?
10. Zayol u num ne ka a lufesefese?
11. Man ka nyi I ne venum ne hingirfese?
12. U fatyo u umber ngyer I num u inongokeyomataan aa karenkejime?
13. Zayol ne ka sha mbasulevtsee shin veayolavekpa ka venongonnum?
14. Ertom u gomneti u shin tine man kpen tar u Benue ngunena?
15. U hen we zayol u party kpangu sha num ne?
16. U hen we mlu u kwaghAondokpa seer zayol sha num ne?
17. U hen we mbamzooasevmbagenevkvave seer zayol sha ayoosu ne?

Mker sha iyaven I mba u ura, nya I dedoo I kahansule man shimban u mgerem ma man kuwamba u ijoorzwa hen mbakuranbyuwa man shimbasurev ken kpen tar u Benue State.

18. U hen we mnyor u mbakuranibuwake Benue State ka kebem shin ka shaager?
19. Tindi u tyo sha kwagh u mgerem man shinyangunena he tarwou?
20. Mfewou sha kwagh u mban u ura noon man shi m kpe u yiavngunena?
21. Kwagh u mbanura noon na u zayolnena sha mlu u sulekahan?
22. U hen we zayol u mban u ura noon ne seer ayoosu aa Fulani man shimbasurev er?
23. Er zayol a lunahan, mbasulev man shimbaagbidyegboughmbaerennena?

Mnenge u sha mlu u akaaty, kwaghaondo man shikpenga sha m seer u ayoosu aa mbakuranibuwa man mbakahansule.

24. Mnenge u tyo sha u vendazendedaandaan aa Fulani seer ayoosu hen tar u Benue State er?
25. Ka nyigbenda or nan fatyo u lun a nya hen Benue State, shierenkwagh her?
26. Ajirnga aa I doo u or uke nana fatyo u za lun her ga?
27. M er tom u tyo man mzoo u mbakwaghaondo sha m bee u zayol ne ngunena?
28. Mlu u ijorzwa hen Fulani man mbasulevngunena?
29. Mbahemenevmbakwaghaondonaiwasen hen mbasulev man Fulani sha mlu u zwan aa mgerem man nyanena?
30. Mbasulev man shi Fulani mbaerennena u been ayoosu ne?

Aaven aa van a bem man ijorzwa hen ato u mbakuranibuwa man mbasulev ken kpen tar u Benue State

34. Mbamhenmba been aayoosu ne nganena? Manshive wase nena?
35. U nenge we mbampavasev sha gbenda u m chivir u Aondokpa seer zayol u num ne?
36. U hen we mzoo u mimi u mbakristu man shimbamusulumi a fatyo u van a bem er?
37. gadia a er nena man mbahemenevmbachiviraondove a bee num ne?
38. M nongo u gomneti u shin tine man shi u he Benue State ngunena sha mbamhenmba been a ayoosu ne?
39. Na se mbamhenov sha gbenda u been a zayol ne?
40. Er tom u ator sha u been aayoosungunena?
41. Er Tindi sha zayol u num u Fulani man shimbasulevhe Benue State.?

Appendix 4: Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Framers and Host Communities in Benue State

Background data

1. Do the community members engage in subsistence or commercial farming?
2. Where the Fulani herders in your community do comes from?
3. Are there other herders' aside Fulani ethnic groups in or around your community?
4. What kind of relationship does your community have with the Fulani herders?
5. What are the major migratory routes of the herders to your community?

Examine the nature and dynamics of herders and farmers conflicts in rural grazing communities in Benue State

6. What is the nature of Fulani settlement in your community? Sedentary or nomadic?
7. How frequent are Fulani herders' migrations to your community? From where?
8. Can you trace the history of herders and farmers in your community?
9. What types of conflicts mostly occur between the herders and farmers in your community?
10. What has been the nature of conflict that exists between Fulani herders and framers and what has changed about the conflict recently?
11. How frequent is the conflict between herders and farmers in your community?
12. What do you think is responsible for frequency in conflict?
13. Can you cite any violent clashes between the herders and farmers in the last five years?
14. Are there intra herders' clashes? How and why?
15. What is the role of the government (Federal and State) in the conflict?
16. How has local politics affected or contributed to the conflict?
17. How has religion affected or contributed the conflict?
18. How has group mobilization escalated the violence between herders and farmers in your community?

Investigate the role of environmental changes, land and water resources on the dynamics of conflicts and cooperative relations among herders and farmers in rural grazing communities in Benue State

19. In your own opinion, what has been the form of migration to your community by herders is it forced, induced or voluntary?
20. What do you think is the major reason for the migration of the Fulani herders to your area?
21. What is the customary belief on water and land ownership in your community?
22. What do you understand about climate or environmental changes and how has it affected your community?
23. How are the recent environmental changes affecting the use of resources such as land, water, and pasture?
24. How has climatic/environmental change or resources scarcity contributed or increased the cause of conflict between farmers and Fulani herders?
25. How are farmers and herders adapting to these environmental changes? (Probe how adaptation to environmental changes is the influencing conflicts)

To examine the role of cultural, religious and economic factors in triggering violence or cooperation between herders and farmers in rural grazing areas.

26. What are the customary differences on land ownerships or access to land responsible for the escalation of crises between herders and farmers in your community??
27. What is the mode of landownership or access to land in your community?
28. What has been the role of cultural and religious activities between the two groups in escalating or managing the conflict ?
29. What are the economic effects of the conflicts to both farmers and herders?
30. What is the nature/ways of cooperation between farmers and Fulani herders?
31. How are farmers and Fulani herders cooperating in the use of resources (water, land, and pasture)?
32. What are the modes of cooperation between herders and farmers and Fulani herders during conflicts, including violent conflict? How and why is there cooperation in times of conflict?
33. What are the differences in cooperation between farmers and herders in peaceful areas as compared to farmers and herders in conflict/violent areas?
34. How do the two groups customarily deal with conflicts?
35. Can you Identify elements of cultural neighbourhood in communities?

Explore the peacebuilding resources for reconciling the warring herders and farmers in Benue State

36. What are the modes of conflict resolution between farmers and herders in your community?
How effective are these measures?
37. How does the socio-cultural ties between herders and farmers generally affect or influence farmer-peacebuilding in your community?
38. What are the existing national policies to address the escalation of farmer-Fulani conflicts and ensure peaceful coexistence between the two groups?
39. What are the interventional roles of traditional and religious leaders in managing the conflicts?
40. What have been the roles of the Federal and State governments in managing the conflicts?
41. What do you think can be done to effectively resolve conflicts between farmers and herders and promote cooperation among them?

Semi-structured interview guide for Farmers and Host Communities in Benue State (Tiv Translation)

(MBA-MPIN SHA A CI U MBASULEV HEN KPEN TAR U BENUE)

Background data

1. Ka nyi tom sule ne kahan? Ka akaa yan shin ka ateen?
2. Fulani mbavelu hen tar wen ne, ka hanvedugh man vevaluaven?
3. Dugh Fulani sha yo, iormbagenevkpambakuranibuwa he ipyaven tar ne?
4. Mzoo u tyo ne ver Fulani ngunena?
5. Igbindave I karan man shinyorunkepentar u Benue ka hana?

Mbamnenge sha mlu u MbakuranIbuwa,shiyar toho ken agar a kekpen tar u Benue State

6. Mtem u Fulani he tarwoungunena? Vetemake gar shin mbazenden yan toho?
7. U fatyo u umburyiase u Fulani vevatema he tar ne?
8. Ka nyizayol ka I hembalun hen ato u Mbakuranibuwa man shimbakahansule?
9. Manayoosu ne ngalu sha nyigbenda? Ka I lu sha zwa shin ka I lu sha gbuuka?
10. Zayol u num ne ka a lufesefese?
11. Man ka nyi I ne venum ne hingirfese?
12. U fatyo u umber ngyer I num u inongokeayomataan aa karenkejime?
13. Zayol ne ka sha mbasulevtsee shin veayolavekpa ka venongonnum?
14. Ertom u gomneti u shin tine man kpen tar u Benue ngunena?
15. U hen we zayol u party kpangu sha num ne?
16. U hen we mlu u kwaghAondokpa seer zayol sha num ne?
17. U hen we mbamzooasevmbagenevkpave seer zayol sha ayoosu ne?

Mker sha iyaven I mba u ura, nya I dedoo I kahansule man shimban u mgerem ma man kuwamba u ijoorzwa hen mbakuranbyuwa man shimbasurev ken kpen tar u Benue State.

18. U hen we mnyor u mbakuranibuwake Benue State ka kebem shin ka shaager?
19. Tindi u tyo sha kwagh u mgerem man shinyangunena he tarwou?
20. Mfewou sha kwagh u mban u ura noon man shi m kpe u yiavngunena?
21. Kwagh u mbanura noon na u zayolnena sha mlu u sulekahan?

22. U hen we zayol u mban u ura noon ne seer ayoosu aa Fulani man shimbasulev er?
23. Er zayol a lunahan, mabasulev man shimbaagbidyegboughmbaerennena?

Mnenge u sha mlu u akaaty, kwaghaondo man shikpenga sha m seer u ayoosu aa mbakuranibuwa man mbakahansule.

24. Mnenge u tyo sha u vendazendedaandaan aa Fulani seer ayoosu hen tar u Benue State er?
25. Ka nyigbenda or nan fatyo u lun a nya hen Benue State, shierenkwagh her?
26. Ajirnga aa I doo u or uke nana fatyo u za lun her ga?
27. M er tom u tyo man mzoo u mbakwaghaondo sha m bee u zayol ne ngunena?
28. Mlu u ijorzwa hen Fulani man mbasulevngunena?
29. Mbahemenevmbakwaghaondonaiwasen hen mbasulev man Fulani sha mlu u zwan aa mgerem man nyanena?
30. Mbasulev man shi Fulani mbaerennena u been ayoosu ne?

Aaven aa van a bem man ijorzwa hen ato u mbakuranibuwa man mbasulev ken kpen tar u Benue State

34. Mbamhenmba been ayoosu ne nganena? Manshive wase nena?
35. U nenge we mbampavasev sha gbenda u m chivir u Aondokpa seer zayol u num ne?
36. U hen we mzoo u mimi u mbakristu man shimbamusulumi a fatyo u van a bem er?
37. gadia a er nena man mbahemenevmbachiviraondove a bee num ne?
38. M nongo u gomneti u shin tine man shi u he Benue State ngunena sha mbamhenmba been a ayoosu ne?
39. Na se mbamhenov sha gbenda u been a zayol ne?
40. Er tom u ator sha u been ayoosungunena?
41. Er Tindi sha zayol u num u Fulani man shimbasulevhe Benue State.?

Appendix 5: Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Fulani Herders in Benue State
Background data

1. Are the community members hosting your grazing areas practicing subsistence or commercial farming?
2. Do you reside in the community, or you are nomadic?
3. Where do you come from and what category of herders do you belong to (Bororo, Fulani, Hausa, foreign)
4. Are there other herders aside from the Fulani in or around your host community, list them?
5. Can you trace the history of herders in your host community?
6. What kind of relationship do you have with the community hosting you?
7. What is the major attraction of herders to Benue State and how often do they migrate to Benue State?
8. What are the major migratory routes of the herders to Benue state?

Examine the nature and dynamics of herders and farmers conflicts in rural grazing communities in Benue State

9. What is the nature of Fulani settlement in the host community? Sedentary or nomadic?
10. What types of conflicts mostly occur between the herders and farmers in the host community?
11. What used to be the nature of this conflict and what has changed about the conflict recently?
12. How frequent is the conflict between herders and farmers in the community?
13. What do you think is responsible for the frequencies in the conflict?
14.)
15. Can you cite any violent clashes between the herders and farmers in the last five years?
16. Have you ever experienced or witnessed conflict within herders? How and why?
17. What is the role of the governments (federal and state) in the conflict?
18. How have local politics and religion affected or contributed to the conflicts?
19. How has group mobilization escalated the violence between herders and farmers in your community?

Investigate the role of environmental changes, land, and water resources on the dynamics of conflicts and cooperative relations among herders and farmers in rural grazing communities in Benue State

20. In our opinion of herders' migration to Benue State community, is it forced, induced or voluntary? How?
21. What do you think is the major reason for the migration of the Fulani herders into your area?
22. What is the customary belief on water and land ownership in your own traditions and custom?
23. What do you understand about climate or environmental changes and how has it affected your community?
24. How are the recent environmental changes affecting the use of resources such as land, water, and pasture?
25. How has climatic/environmental change or resources scarcity contributed to or increased the cause of conflict between farmers and Fulani herders? How are they responsible for these conflicts? (Probe how these environmental changes cause the conflicts).
26. How are farmers and herders adapting to these environmental changes? (Probe how adaptation to environmental changes are the influencing conflicts)

To examine the role of cultural, religious, and economic factors in triggering violence or cooperation between herders and farmers in rural grazing areas.

27. What are the customary differences on land ownerships or access to land responsible for the escalation of crises between herders and farmers in your community??
28. What is the mode of landownership or access to land in your community?
29. What has been the role of cultural and religious activities between the two groups in escalating or managing the conflict?
30. What are the economic effects of the conflicts to both farmers and herders?
31. What is the nature/ways of cooperation between farmers and Fulani herders?
32. How are farmers and Fulani herders cooperating in the use of resources (water, land, and pasture)?
33. What are the modes of cooperation between herders and farmers and Fulani herders during conflicts, including violent conflict? How and why is there cooperation in times of conflict?

34. What are the differences in cooperation between farmers and herders in peaceful areas as compared to farmers and herders in conflict/violent areas?
35. How do the two groups customarily deal with conflicts?
36. What are the elements of cultural neighbourhood in the host community?

Explore the peacebuilding resources for reconciling the warring herders and farmers in Benue State

37. What are the modes of conflict resolution between farmers and herders in your community?
How effective are these measures?
38. How do the socio-cultural ties between herders and farmers generally affect or influence farmer-peacebuilding in your community?
39. What are the existing national policies to address the escalation of farmer-Fulani conflicts and ensure peaceful coexistence between the two groups?
40. What are the interventional roles of traditional and religious leaders in managing the conflicts?
41. What have been the roles of the Federal and State governments in managing the conflicts?
42. What do you think can be done to effectively resolve conflicts between farmers and herders and promote cooperation among them?

Appendix 6: Ethical Approval



09 June 2023

Olawale James Gbadeyan (221115844)
School Of Social Sciences
Howard College

Dear OJ Gbadeyan,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00005269/2023

Project title: Interrogating inter-group relations and peacebuilding among farmers and herders in rural grazing areas in Benue State, Nigeria

Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 08 February 2023 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 09 June 2024.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix 7: Informed Consent

Appendices

Informed Consent Document

Dear Participant,

My name is Gbadeyan, Olawale James (221115844). I am a PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus. The title of my research is: *Interrogating Inter-group Relations and Peace building among Farmers and Herders in Rural Grazing Areas (RUGA) in Benue state, Nigeria*. The aim of the study is to examine the nature and dynamics of herders and farmers conflicts and explore the intergroup social ties/network for peace building in rural grazing communities in Benue State, Nigeria. I am interested in interviewing you to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter.

Please note that:

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your views in this interview will be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in any form in the study.
- The interview will take about 45 Minutes
- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my supervisors. After a period of 5years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate, please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures)

I can be contacted at the School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, Durban. Email: gbadeyan2@gmail.com; Cell: [REDACTED]

My supervisor is Dr DOE Ettang, who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Pietermaritzburg Campus, Durban of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email ettang@ukzn.ac.za, Phone number: +27 33 260 5283

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I..... *(full names of participant)* hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project ,and I consent to participate in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.I understand the intention of the research.I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....