



Farmers and herders conflicts and its impact on the education of christians and muslims children in Kaduna state, Nigeria

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Abstract

Farmers and Herder's conflicts have been an age long phenomenon across the world. The devastating impacts of the conflicts has affected many aspects of human endeavors thereby making government seeking solutions. Kaduna State in North Western Nigeria has had a share of the farmers and Herder's conflicts which apart from affecting social and economic activitie, it has also impacted on the education of both Christian and Muslims children. This study assesses the impacts of farmers and Herder's conflicts with an objective of assessing the impacts of the conflicts on the education of Christians and Muslims children in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Respondents were purposively selected from among Christians and Muslims from eight local government areas of the state where the conflicts has occurred. Data was collected through questionnaire and analyzed using the Social Science Package Software Program. Findings revealed that there is a significant impact of the farmers and Herder's conflicts on the education of children in terms of disruption of academic activities, school drop out, kidnapping of children and destruction of schools. The study recommended among others the need for government to strengthen security around schools to prevent cases of kidnapping while schools destroyed should be rebuilt.

Keywords: Farmers, herder's, conflicts and education

Introduction

For over a decade now, there has been violent conflicts between farmers and herders across the country resulting in the loss of many lives and the destruction of properties worth millions of naira. This unfortunate and worrisome situation has no doubt continued to worsen the security situation in the affected areas. It has also crippled socio-economic activities, hamper peaceful coexistence between people of divergent communities and has aggravated ethno religious tensions. It has also affected academic activities in many areas. Kaduna state is among the states in the North West Region of Nigeria affected by this conflicts. The state is still grappling to contain the insecurity situation occasioned by the farmers and herders conflicts as well as kidnapping and banditry. The situation in Kaduna State cut across the three senatorial zones of the state viz; North, Central and the Southern Senatorial Zone. While the government is making efforts to address the situation, it has however continued to be faced with emerging recurrence of this menace. This then, raises more concerns about the causes and effects of the conflicts as it affects peaceful coexistence of the people, socio-economic activities and education in the state. If unchecked and allowed to linger beyond control, it can affect national cohesion, national growth and development.

Worried by this situation, and in a bid to find a lasting solution to the problem, the research is aimed at assessing the lingering farmers and herders conflicts in Kaduna state, its effects on the economy, communal living and education in the state.

Statement of the Problem

Peace is a prerequisite for any meaningful development. When there is conflict, it scares people away from coming to invest while those already in business will migrate to peaceful environment. Therefore conflicts of whatever nature often bring about many effects on the people such as

social, economic, religious and educational activities. According to Ndujihe (2019) ^[12], over 5, 113 Nigerians were killed in eleven months between March and May, 2018 in Northern States of Borno, Adamawa, Taraba, Benue, Plateau, Kaduna and Zamfara states as a result of Boko Haram insurgency, farmers/herders conflicts or kidnapping. Kaduna state was fourth on the list in the state by state death records with 458 deaths. However, from that period to 2021, the conflicts have not ceased and casualty figures are on the rise with recurrent incidences in Zangon kataf, Kaura, Kauru, Chikun, Igabi, Birnin gwari and Giwa Local government areas.

Although there are commentators who try to give the farmers and herders conflicts an ethno religious colouration but the reality is that both Christians and Muslims as well as various tribes have been negatively affected by this problem. The effects of this conflicts are enormous both to the state and the nation as a whole. This problem has severed cordial relationship between Christians and Muslims as well as the indigenous people and Fulani people in areas affected. Academic activities have been disrupted again and again as schools have to be close down while academic calendar adjusted and readjusted. Farming and other agricultural activities and cattle rearing have also been negatively affected. Many farmers can no longer go to their farms because of fear of being attacked. Crops have been destroyed in some communities by suspected herders. This has given growing concerns about a possible food crisis in the coming year. There are also destruction of many lives and properties such as houses and households items thereby causing a displacement of hundreds of people who are now mostly sheltered in Internally Displaced Camps (IDPs) and houses of relations causing a humanitarian crisis. In some places worship centres such as churches and Mosques were destroyed causing frosty relationship between Christians and Muslims in the affected areas. This unhealthy situation if not properly addressed both at the state and at the federal

level, can worsen the security situation in the state. It will also affect food security, inhibit cordial social relationship between Christians and Muslims as well as Fulani herders and farmers in the areas affected. It will also further bring about backwardness in the education of the children of both farmers and herders. This no doubt, will adversely hinder national growth and development. It is based on this glaring negative indices that the researcher set out to investigate the impacts of the farmers and herders conflicts on the education of the children of Christian and Muslims in Kaduna state with a view of proffering practical solutions to the problem so identified for the general good of the society.

Objectives

The objective of this study is to ascertain the academic effects of the farmers and herders conflicts on the education of the children of farmers and herders in Kaduna state. A null hypothesis in line with the objectives was also developed which states that there is no significant difference in the responses of respondents across age level on the impacts of farmers and Herder's conflicts on the education of the children of Christian and Muslims in Kaduna State.

Historical Relationship between Farmers and Herders

Farmers and herders have sustained a cordial relationship in the time past. They maintained a symbiotic relationship where each party gains from the other. The Fulani herdsmen were often sought for by the farmers to allow their cattle settle in their farms during dry season and deposit their waste products which is rich in manure for soil fertility. The Fulanis on the other hand were allowed by the farmers to feed or graze on the farms after harvest. Ibrahim (2018) ^[8] supported this view. According to him, there has been a good relationship between the farmers over the years as both benefit from each other.

According to Leme (2018) ^[11], this relationship was hampered by foreign Fulani herdsmen mostly from neighboring West Africa and Central African Republic who due to desert encroachment and climate change are forced to move down to the Middle Belt Region and Southern part of Nigeria in search of grazing lands. These foreign Fulani Pastoralist have no regard to the existing cordiality between the local farmers and the local Fulani Pastoralist. They move with their cattle and engage in open grazing even on farmlands. This often times leads to confrontation and conflicts between the farmers who wants to protect their crops and the Fulanis who wants to feed their cattle. However, this conflicts has not taking this dangerous dimensions of violent killings of people and houses in large magnitude. According to Kazeem (2017) ^[9], over the past years, Nigeria has seen an uptick in violent activities of nomadic Fulani herdsmen. The threat of crisis has lingered with the effects of climate change and rapid desertification of grazing land and lower rainfall making cattle rearing more difficult in the herdsmen northern Nigeria base. Seeking alternatives, herdsmen have journeyed south seeking fertile grazing land for their cattle. But with that search often leading to encroaching on farmlands in Nigerias Middle Belt has increased violent conflicts between farmers and herdmen which has become a worrisome occurrence.

Gaffey (2016) argued that the conflicts between mostly Fulani herdsmen and settled communities have been concentrated in North Central Nigeria particularly Benue,

Plateau, Kaduna and Nasarawa Nigeria's Middle Belt where the four problem states are located is an area of ethnic and religious diversity, where the majority Muslims North meets the largely Christians South. On top of this, the Fulani have a historical rivalries with other ethnic groups in Nigeria particularly the Hausa and Northern minority ethnic army who fought a four year Jihad in the predominantly Hausa states of what is now Northern Nigeria eventually triumphing and establishing the Sokoto caliphate.

An Overview of Farmers and Herders Conflicts

Communal clashes between farmers and herders have become a disturbing trend in Nigeria in the past ten years. There were large scales of attacks in Kaduna and other North Central and North Western States of Nigeria. According to Eyekpemi (2016) ^[4], the turbulent conflicts of farmers and herders stand out because of the seeming boldness of the perpetrators and the mystery surrounding their real agenda. While many people believe that it is simply a farming grazing land and water disputes whereby they clash with farmers who accused them of damaging their crops and failure to control their animals, the Fulanis under the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association denied that, alleging that the Fulanis are being attacked by gangs from farming communities who try to steal their cattle and they are just defending themselves.

The incursion of Fulani herdsmen from many borders into the country and their subsequent attacks of farming communities in the Middle Belt Region is the second greatest security challenge confronting Nigeria now apart from Boko Haram insurgency. Thus, the attacks by the Fulani herders on sedentary communities have been increasing since it started. The clash between farmers and herders has been devastating in Kaduna resulting in the deaths of many people and the destruction of properties worth millions of naira particularly in Birnin gwari, Chikun, Kajuru, Zangon kataf, kaura and Kauru local government areas (Olawole, 2020) ^[17].

Impacts of Insecurity on Education

The impact of insecurity on education, particularly in the style of education, is a significant concern in many parts of the world. Insecurity can manifest in various forms, including terrorism, kidnapping, and armed conflicts, which can disrupt the learning environment and affect the quality of education (Adebayo, 2017) ^[2]. According to Akubo (2019) ^[3], insecurity can lead to a decline in student enrollment, as parents may be hesitant to send their children to school due to fear of violence or abduction. This can have long-term consequences on the educational system, as it can lead to a shortage of skilled workers and a decline in economic development (Oyewole, 2020) ^[18].

The style of education is also affected by insecurity, as teachers may be forced to adapt their teaching methods to accommodate the changing security situation (Eze, 2018) ^[5]. ^[6] . For example, in areas where there is a high risk of terrorism, teachers may need to incorporate security protocols into their lesson plans, such as evacuation drills and emergency response procedures (Ibrahim, 2020) ^[8]. Additionally, insecurity can limit the availability of educational resources, such as textbooks and technology, which can further

exacerbate the challenges faced by students and teachers (Okoro, 2019) [16]. As noted by Nwosu (2018) [14], the lack of access to quality educational resources can have a negative impact on student outcomes, including lower academic achievement and reduced opportunities for future success.

The impact of insecurity on style education can be mitigated through the implementation of effective security measures and policies (Uzoehina, 2020) [20]. According to Okeke (2019) [15], schools can take steps to improve security, such as installing security cameras, hiring security personnel, and developing emergency response plans. Furthermore, governments and educational institutions can work together to provide support to students and teachers affected by insecurity, including counseling services and academic support programs (Ezema, 2018) [5, 6]. By prioritizing the safety and security of students and teachers, educational institutions can help to promote a positive and supportive learning environment, which is essential for academic success and personal development (Nwachukwu, 2020) [13].

Methodology

This researcher adopted a survey design method to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data from the population. According to Tanny (2018) [19], survey research designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administers a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviours or characteristics of population. In this research, the researcher intends to collect data from the population using questionnaire from a sample of the population. Questionnaire was developed and administered to six hundred respondents across four out of eight local government areas of Southern Kaduna sensational zone. The Local Government areas are; Jamaa, Kaura, Sanga and Kauru. These are areas where farmers and Herder's Conflicts have taken place and academic activities adversely affected.

Results

Table 1: Academic impact of farmers and herders conflicts on the education of the children of Christians and Muslims in Kaduna States

S/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1	Farmers and herders conflicts lead to the destruction of many public primary and secondary schools in the areas affected by conflict	557	276	149	49	3.30
2	Farmers and herders conflicts lead to closure of many schools for a long period of time	449	83	57	42	3.39
3	Farmers and herders conflicts hamper and affect school academic calendars negatively	541	12	19	59	3.39
4	Farmers and herders conflicts reduce students/pupils enrolment in schools	476	482	24	49	3.34
5	Farmers and herders conflicts make some pupils/students unable to complete their education due to fear of attack	604	376	19	32	3.51
6	Farmers and herders conflicts scare teachers from going to teach in the affected areas	528	422	42	39	3.39
7	Farmers and herders conflicts reduce students/pupils academic performance because of frequent interruptions by the conflict	605	369	21	36	3.49
8	Farmers and herders conflicts discourage communal efforts in building new schools and reconstructing school property destroyed	509	435	46	41	3.37
	Cumulative Mean					3.38

Decision/Benchmark mean = 2.500

Farmers and herders conflicts affect the education of the children of both Christians and Muslims in Kaduna, This is because the cumulative mean response of 3.387 is above the decision/benchmark mean of 2.500.

Specifically, farmers and herders conflicts hinders pupils/students from completing their Primary and Secondary education due to fear of attack as this view had the highest mean agreement level of 3.505. Detail reponses showed that while 604 strongly agreed, 376 agreed as against 19 that disagreed and the rest 32 strongly disagreed. In the same vein, Farmers and herders conflicts reduce students/pupils academic performance because of frequent interruptions. This view attracted the second highest mean response of 3.497 with 605 in strong agreement while 369 agreed as against 21 that disagreed and the rest 36 in strong disagreement with the view.

In summary, farmers and herders conflicts affect the education of the children of both Christians and Muslims in Kaduna and States to a very large extent with specific assertions that Farmers and herders conflict make it impossible for pupils/students to complete their Primary/Secondary education due to fear of attack. Also farmers and herders conflicts reduce students/pupils academic performance because of frequent interruptions. Constant conflicts between the two groups does not only

disrupt academic activities of the children but affects their academic growth and development.

Discussions

Based on the findings in this study on the effects of farmers and herders conflicts on the social life of Christians and Muslims, it is clear that they are seen in the displacement of people whose houses were often destroyed during the conflicts.

The conflicts have adverse impact on the academic development of Christians and Muslims children in Kaduna state because the findings reveal that most schools in the areas affected have either been destroyed or closed down by the government due to insecurity. This finding is in line with the position of Okwori and Angenyi (2019) who maintain that schools are often destroyed during conflicts while others are becoming camps for Internally Displaced. This of course has adverse effects on the academic development of the children of both Christians and Muslims who are forced to stay at home during the conflicts. Similarly, the finding shows that there is high level of school drop out as a result of the farmers and herders conflicts as well as poor academic performance due to constant disruption of academic activities because of insecurity. This finding corresponds with the finding of Ojukwu (2017), that says most school children drop out of school due to insecurity in

order to go and learn one trade or the other. It also has negative effects on the performance of those pupils /students in schools because of the psychological trauma some of them experienced during the conflicts which hinders their concentration in school.

These impact have grave implications for the academic development of the state affected and the nation at large. In Kaduna state for instance, school calendars have been adjusted and readjusted again and again due to insecurity and thus obviously has prolonged the graduation years of pupils and students. Agbo (2020) argues that the constant disruption of school calendars and in some cases destruction of some schools have led to drop out of children from schools and it has turned some tertiary institutions into grazing fields. The implications of this is that the number of out of school children increase in the society and some of them become easy tools to be used for criminal activities. It engenders underdevelopment of the country because no nation develops without the development of the education of its children.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Education, the world over is a basic requirement for national development. Any interruption to education like in the case of conflicts brings about setback. The farmers and Herder's Conflicts has no doubt brought about dwindling of academic activities in Kaduna State like closure of schools and kidnapping of school children. This situation must be tracked headlong in order to avoid future occurrences.

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended: 1. There Should be security presence in schools that are prone to attack during conflicts. 2. In order to improve enrollment of students/ pupils, schools destroyed should be rebuilt and rehabilitated and well fenced to give confidence to students and teachers and to prevent kidnapping and attacks.

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