

ASSESSMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE SOCIAL STUDIES STUDENTS PERCEPTION ON
CAUSES OF FARMERS-HERDERS CONFLICT IN NORTH-WEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined the Undergraduate Social Studies Students' Perception on Causes of Farmers-Herders Conflict in North-West, Nigeria. The design of the study was descriptive survey research method. The population of this study consisted of all the undergraduate Social Studies students of 400 Levels in degree awarding institutions of the region under study which offer Social Studies Education at the B. Ed Level numbering 873. The sample size used for the study was 267. The sampling techniques adopted for this study were purposive sampling proportionate sampling. Structured questionnaire was used for collecting data. The content and construct validity were ascertained by relevant experts. The reliability coefficient index stood at 0.86 determined using Cronbach Alpha method. The study used mean and standard deviation to answer the research question while independent samples t-test statistic was used to test the research hypothesis at 0.05 Alpha level of significance. The study indicates no significant difference between the perceptions of undergraduate students on the causes of farmers-herders conflict in north-west, Nigeria. The study recommends a need for orientation and education of the herders as well as farmers.

Keywords: *Causes, Farmer-Herders, Perception, Social studies and Undergraduates*

Introduction

Conflict has been described as a permanent reality than peace in every human society. The incessant conflict witnessed in the tropics has resulted in loss of lives, properties and environment degradation as also witnessed in some developed countries. The production potential of grassland and livestock in the arid and semi-arid region is constrained by low and variable rainfall (Ker, 2007). Therefore, there is a need for grazing movements to access pasture resources across regions in order to ensure food security for herds. In North-West agriculture and pastoralist have coexisted side- by -side for centuries. Over time, many herding and farming communities in the same area have developed interdependent relationships through reciprocity, other exchange, and support. At the same time, conflicts between herders and farmers have arisen for centuries. Recently, a small number of these disputes have escalated into widespread violence and displacement of people. In some cases, a herder- farmer conflict there is an ongoing grassroots war in Northern states of Nigeria between herdsman and farming communities. It is an old age problem, but it has escalated in the last decade and has assumed a very deadly dimension. Social Studies is a natural development from man's interaction and exploration of the environment in which he lives. It concerns the concrete experiences man encounters as he relates to the various aspects of his environment. Social Studies Education equips man with useful knowledge, practical skills, positive values and attitudes to be sufficiently informed to be sufficiently informed to tackle societal problems and issues Social Studies man objectives or purpose is to help the individual develop the ability to adapt and contribute to the ever-changing environment (Ololobou, 2010).

Social Studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such discipline as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography history, law, philosophy, political science psychology, religion and sociology as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics and natural sciences. According to Bayero and Lawal (2014) opined that Social Studies is the sum of leaning derived from the various aspects of human thoughts and experiences for the purpose of solving man's interminable problems. Conflict have been part of human nature as long as human being exist, interact with one another, and engage in diverse economic, social, cultural, and political activities based on the exploitation, utilization and management of human and material resources. It is further exacerbated by differences in interest and

competition over the securing and utilization of the scarce space for grazing and farming activities. It is undisputable fact, that resource ownership and utilization have determined the nature and dimensions of most conflict involving man. However, land has remained an overwhelming source of conflict between farmers and herdsman. Social Studies Education has significant impact on the issue of farmer-herder crisis. Social Studies Education is concerned with human relationship and societal development. This study is timely due to the growing rate of clashes between farmers and herdsman in Nigeria. In every society world over, it is the obligation of the government to citizens to guarantee their survival and protection in the overall uplifting of the society. Social Studies Education can be used to address the issue with farmers and herdsman.

The conflict occurs when Fulani herdsman move into the farmers' farms with their cattle. This usually leads to the destruction of farmers' crops. Conflicts between farmers and nomadic cattle herders have been a common feature of economic livelihood in West Africa (Tonah, 2006). In the period before the beginning of the 20th century, the problem was mainly restricted to the Savanna belts of West Africa. A cattle rearing was mainly prevalent in the Guinea, Sudan and Sahel Savanna belts where crop production was carried out only during the short rainy season on a small scale. This gave the herders access to a vast area of grass land. As time went on, and with the introduction of irrigated farming in the Savanna belt of Nigeria, and the increased withering of pasture during the dry season, less pasture was available to cattle herds. The herdsman had to move south ward of the coastal zone where the rainy season is longer and the soil retains moisture for long in search of pasture and water – a movement called transhumance (Akpaki, 2002).

The large number of wild animals and the fear of losing animals to diseases, especially trypanosomiasis, prevented herders for setting permanently in the humid zone (Blench, 1994, Tonah, 2006) stated that there is a consensus among observers that farmers – herders clashes have only since 20th century become widespread in the coastal countries of West Africa. Though concluded after an investigation of farmers – herders relations in Burkina Faso that the conflict between Mossi farmers and Fulani herders was an old phenomenon Tonah (2006) opined that the factors that account for the increasing farmer/herder conflict include the Southward movement of pastoral herdsman in the humid and sub – humid zones, promoted by the successful control of the menace posed by disease, the widespread availability of veterinary medicine and the expansion of farming activities into areas that hitherto served as pastureland. He further suggested that since the 1950s there has been a growth in human as well as livestock population in the coastal countries of West Africa this give rise to an increased pressure on natural resources and stiff competition for available resources between farmers and herders. (Adebayo, 1997; Breuser, *et al*, 1998; Bermadet, 1999).

Tonah (2006) is of the view that since the Sehelian drought of the 1970s and 1980s and the accompanying migration of a huge number of pastoralists into the fringes of the humid forest zone of West Africa, there has been a massive increase of the incidence of farmers–herders conflict. Causes of these conflicts are widespread in Nigeria in recent times. For instance, in Densina, Bombi, Toungomedegali, Mubi North in Adamawa State, Bauchi, Dass Toro, Gamawa Local Government Areas, Benue state Agatu, Bukuru, Gboko, Logo, Makurdi, Oju, Oturkpo, Tarka, Vandeikya are all affect local government areas in Benue state. Nasarawa, Niger, Borno, Edo, Ekiti, Enugu, Gombe, Kogi, Kwara, Oghave been killed and there was massive loss of lives and destruction of properties.

In the North- west zone, some states have their fair share of this crisis between herdsman and farmers - Jigawa, Kaduna, Zamfara, Sokoto and Kebbi states. All these states have experiences the clash of farmer-herdsman in their states. Zamfara, Gummi, Kaura-Namoda and Maradun are all affected local government areas of the farmer-herdsman crisis in Kaduna state local government area of Birnin – Gwari, Igabi, Jema'a, Kachia, Kaduna-North, Kauru, Lere, Kagarko and Zango–Kataf. Eighty-five (85) people were killed; about 3,500 farmers were displaced and rendered homeless in the hostility between in most communities between January and March, 2018 (*Vanguard*, March 13, 2018). Nweze (2005) states that many farmers and herders lost their lives and herds, while others have experienced dwindling productivity in their herds. This was supported by Ajuwon (2004), as cited by Nweze (2005) in his observation that in Kaduna State for instance between 1996 and 2005 106 people died, 118 were injured in the violence that often accompanied such conflicts. These conflicts are a threat to peace and national stability. They also have implications for ethnic co-existence, in a multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria.

Land resources are very important to man for his day to day use as they provide people with living space, raw materials for obtaining satisfaction for material needs and constitute man's physical environment. Man depends on land for sustenance, food, clothing, shelter, and housing and for manufacturing of goods. Land is not only crucial for rural people who have their livelihood based on agriculture, but also a basis of wealth and power. It is expected that everybody regardless of tribe, beliefs, religious, educational background, culture and sex we should live together for the sake of unity and peace the society need moral values such the inviolability of human life, individual peace and freedom, equal values of all people, equality between man and woman solidarity among all the members of the communities. Unfortunately, in Nigeria while the land resources are beginning to reduce and the need for such resources has continued to increase, leading to clashes between farmers who need land for farming and herders who need the same land for grazing. Nigeria has experienced a considerable increase in natural resource conflict since the beginning of the 1990s. Of particular concern are the clashes between farmers and herders. Eco-resource conflict in Nigeria is the rising incidence of herder and farmer confrontation. This appears to be the most prevalent and pervasive in the northern region of Nigeria, which has witnessed the worst occurrences of herders and farmers violence as a result of livelihood struggles (Masari, 2006). Efforts must therefore be made to find a lasting solution to the problem before it engulfs the entire nation. It is on this note that this study examined Undergraduate Social Studies students' perception on causes of farmers-herders conflict in North-West, Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

- i. To find out the perception of undergraduate Social Studies students the on causes of farmers-herders conflict in north-west, Nigeria

Research Question

- i. What is the perception of undergraduate Social Studies students the on causes of farmers-herders conflict in north-west, Nigeria?

Null Hypothesis

- i. There is no significant difference between the perceptions of undergraduate Social Studies students on the causes of farmers-herders conflict in north-west, Nigeria;

Methodology

This study employed descriptive survey research method. Olayiwola (2010) describes descriptive survey design as a method that describes a given state of affairs at a particular time. Additionally, Koul (2011) the purpose of descriptive survey research is to find out or study a group of people or items by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. Nwana (2008) states that the design is relevant because it enables the researcher to describe an event, situation or phenomenon, as it is, at the time of the study. The population of this study consisted of all the undergraduate Social Studies students of 400 Levels in degree awarding institutions of the region under study which offer Social Studies Education at the B. Ed Level. The total population of 400 Level students in the above institution stood at 873. The sample size used for the study was 267. The choice of the sample size was based on Research Advisors' (2006) table for sample selection. The table provides the minimum expected return instruments at 95% confidence level, 50% level of variability and ± 5 margin of error. The sampling techniques adopted for this study were purposive sampling proportionate sampling. Structured questionnaire entitled "Undergraduates Perception on Impact of Social Studies on Peace and Conflict Resolution among Farmers and Herders Questionnaire (UPISSOPCRAFH-Q)" was used for collecting data. The questionnaire was constructed using four-point modified Likert Scale: Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Disagree and Strongly Disagree with scores of 4-1 respectively. The content and construct validity were ascertained by relevant experts. The reliability coefficient index stood at 0.86 determined using Cronbach Alpha method. This agrees with the view of Lawal (2014) that a reliable test will have a high reliability coefficient close to positive one (1). The study used mean and standard deviation to answer the research question while independent samples t-test statistic was used to test the research hypothesis at 0.05 Alpha level of significance.

Results

Research Question: What is the perception of undergraduate social studies students the on causes of farmers-herders conflict in north-west, Nigeria?

Table 1: Means and Standard deviations on difference between the perception of undergraduate social studies students the on immediate and remote causes of farmers-herders conflict in north-west, Nigeria

Causes	N	Mean	SD	Std. Mean	Err Mean Diff	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Immediate Cause	139	95.5800	7.78038	1.10031	2.55902	-0.28891	5.40696
Remote Cause	128	93.0210	9.11002	.76182			
Total	267						

Table 1 presents undergraduate social studies students' perception on the immediate and remote causes of farmers-herders conflict in north-west, Nigeria. This assessment was carried out in relation to immediate and remote causes of the conflict. The mean score for immediate causes of the conflict stood at (M=95.5800, SD=7.78038) which was higher than that of remote causes (M=93.0210, SD=9.11002). The mean difference was 2.55902 in favour of the immediate causes of the farmers-herders conflict in the study area. The 95% confidence interval of the difference was from -0.28891 to 5.40696. Therefore, there was a difference in perception undergraduate social studies students on the immediate and remote causes of farmers-herders conflict in north-west, Nigeria.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the perceptions of undergraduate social studies students on the causes of farmers-herders conflict in north-west, Nigeria

Table 2: Summary of independent samples t-test on the perception of undergraduate social studies students on the causes of farmers-herders conflict in north-west, Nigeria

Causes	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	P
Immediate Cause	139	95.5800	7.78038	1.772	265	.078
Remote Cause	128	93.0210	9.11002			
Total	267					

Table 2 presents the mean scores of undergraduate social studies students' perception on the causes of farmers-herders conflict in north-west, Nigeria. The mean score for immediate causes was (M=95.5800, SD=7.78038) which was higher than that of remote causes (M=93.0210, SD=9.11002). The mean difference was 2.55902 in favour of the immediate causes. The 95% confidence interval of the difference was from -0.28891 to 5.40696. The statistic shows that $t = 1.772$, $p = 0.078$; the null hypothesis was retained.

Discussion

It was found that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of undergraduate Social Studies students on the causes of farmers-herders conflict in north-west, Nigeria. In the empirical research on banking organisation carried out by Obasan (2011), he stated that the causes of conflicts are diverse and often include unacceptable employment terms, work conditions, perceived improper styles of management and ineffective means of grievance communication. He attributed the main source of conflict within the organisation to perception and value problems. According to Opoku (2014), the causes of the farmer-herder conflict are; shooting of innocent citizens by herdsman, destruction of food crops, raping of women on their farms, herdsman causing bushfires, pollution of water bodies by herdsman and cattle rustling. These correspond to the findings of Ofuoku & Isife (2009) from their study in Delta State. A field research conducted by Ofem & Inyang (2014) in Yakurr region of River State, revealed the same factors mentioned by Ofuoku & Isife (2009). In their survey, both farmers and nomads agreed on the same factors as the causes of the conflict. However, the nomads disagreed regarding the destruction of crops, over-grazing of fallow land, sexual harassment of women by nomads, indiscriminate defecation by cattle on roads as major causes. In addition, Ayih (2003) recognized indigenization of the nomadic grazing communities; legalization of farming or grazing rights as another factor that engender land tenure disputes contestations between the farming and herding communities. This argument is supported by Breusers et al (1998). According to their study, competition over natural resources caused by human population growth, growth in the population of herds and extension of cultivated areas are the causes of the farmer-herder conflicts.

This is also captured by Nchi (2013), as he argued that Fulani pastoralists and sedentary farmers are fighting for pastures and farmlands which are decreasing as the population of humans and cattle increase.

Okonkwo (2004) stated that social studies education exposes learners to the problems in the society and equip them with necessary skills needed for their survival. In a related development, Aibangbe (2004) asserts that social studies education raises a generation of individuals, who can think critically for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others and appreciate all those values specified under the nation's broad national objectives. Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2008) opined that effective learning of social studies focus on learning the virtues of co-operation, perseverance or endurance, self-control or self-discipline, truthfulness, loyalty, patience, obedience, courage, bravery, kindness, dedication to duty, hard-work or diligence, tolerance, love for others mutual harmony and co-existence, and the recognition and pursuance of ones rights. In a related development, Ololobou (2010) stressed that the primary purpose of social studies education is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally interdependent world.

Conclusion

Based on the outcome, the following it is concluded that Social studies education objectives and content areas impacted positively on Peace and Conflict Resolution among Farmers and Herders in North-West, Nigeria;

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that:

- i. In order to avert the recurring herders-farmers conflict in North-West zone, 'dialogue and conflict resolution' approaches at community levels. Indeed, conflict is totally unavoidable in every human setting, however, its early detection and proper management could forestall conflict escalation from individual to group levels, and from group to communal levels, and beyond as witnessed in the case of herder-farmer clashes in Nigeria;
- ii. Orientation and education of the herders as well as farmers. Majority of the herders and rural farmers are uneducated and uninformed about government laws, policies and programmes which impede peaceful coexistence. This is one point that the critics of the ranching system and Fulaniphobia propagandists needs to factor in their analysis, predictions, and judgment;
- iii. The proactive measures in corporate intelligence gathering, adequate training of policemen, adequate tooling and motivation of the security personnel should be taken. The reactive measures include the prompt response by the police and supportive security agencies to distress calls from either the cultivators or pastoralists, making arrests, and ensuring appropriate prosecution of the suspected attackers.

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