

# A Review of the Impact of Farmers-Herders Conflicts on the Socioeconomic Well-Being of Specific Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Kwara, Nigeria

## *Kajian Kesan Konflik Peladang-Penternak Terhadap Kesejahteraan Sosioekonomi Kawasan Kerajaan Tempatan (LGA) Terpilih di Kwara, Nigeria*

Umuani Aliagan Katibi<sup>1</sup>, Abd. Hakim bin Mohad@Mohamad Ramli<sup>2</sup> & Ibrahim Fahad Sulaiman<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Pusat Pengajian Teras, Universiti Islam Sains Malaysia, Bandar Baru Nilai, 71800 Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia;

<sup>3</sup> Fakulti Kepimpinan dan Pengurusan, Universiti Islam Sains Malaysia, Bandar Baru Nilai, 71800 Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia;

### Article progress

Received: 7 February 2024

Accepted: 22 April 2024

Published: 31 May 2024

### \*Corresponding author:

Abd. Hakim bin  
Mohad@Mohamad Ramli,  
Pusat Pengajian Teras,  
Universiti Islam Sains  
Malaysia, Bandar Baru Nilai,  
71800 Nilai, Negeri Sembilan,  
Malaysia;  
Email:  
abdhakim@usim.edu.my

**Abstrak:** Farmers-herders conflicts pose significant challenges to socioeconomic development in Nigeria, particularly in Kwara State. This study aims to provide a broad appraisal of the effects of farmers-herders conflicts on the socioeconomic well-being of selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study uses a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach to studying farmers-herders conflicts in Kwara State, Nigeria. It focuses on understanding their impacts, exploring root causes, analysing responses and interventions, and identifying pathways towards peace and development. The study focuses on analysing the multifaceted impacts of these conflicts, including their consequences on livelihoods, food security, education, healthcare, and overall community well-being. Drawing from a wide range of scholarly sources, this review examines the historical context, root causes, and dynamics of farmers-herders conflicts in Kwara State. It explores the complex relationship of factors such as land access, resource competition, and communal tensions that trigger these conflicts. Also, the review investigates the responses and interventions by both government and non-governmental organisations to mitigate the adverse effects of these conflicts on the affected communities. Besides, the review sheds light on the resilience and coping strategies affected communities adopt to navigate the challenges posed by farmers-herders conflicts. It highlights community-based initiatives, conflict resolution mechanisms, and grassroots efforts to restore peace and socioeconomic stability. The findings of this study underscore the urgent need for sustainable conflict resolution strategies and development initiatives that prioritise the well-being of affected communities in Kwara State. It also calls for a holistic approach involving various stakeholders to address the complex and interconnected issues arising from farmers-herders conflicts. This paper contributes to the ongoing discourse on conflict management, peacebuilding, and socioeconomic development in Kwara State and similar conflict-affected regions.

**Kata kunci:** Farmers-Herders Conflicts, Socioeconomic Well-being, Local Government Areas, Kwara State, Conflict Resolution;

**Abstract:** Konflik peladang-penternak menimbulkan cabaran besar kepada pembangunan sosioekonomi di Nigeria, khususnya di negeri Kwara. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk memberi penilaian menyeluruh mengenai kesan konflik peladang-penternak terhadap kesejahteraan sosioekonomi Kawasan

Kerajaan Tempatan (LGA) terpilih di negeri Kwara, Nigeria. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan menyeluruh dan pelbagai dimensi untuk mengkaji konflik peladang-penternak di negeri Kwara, Nigeria. Kajian ini memberi tumpuan untuk memahami kesan mereka, meneroka punca asal, menganalisis tindak balas dan intervensi, serta mengenal pasti jalan ke arah keamanan dan pembangunan. Kajian ini juga memberi tumpuan kepada menganalisis impak pelbagai konflik ini, termasuk kesan mereka terhadap cara hidup, keselamatan makanan, pendidikan, penjagaan kesihatan, dan kesejahteraan masyarakat secara keseluruhan. Berdasarkan pelbagai sumber ilmiah, kajian ini mengkaji konteks sejarah, punca asal, dan dinamik konflik petani-pengembala di negeri Kwara. Ia meneroka hubungan kompleks faktor-faktor seperti akses tanah, pertandingan sumber, dan ketegangan komunal yang mencetuskan konflik ini. Selain itu, kajian ini turut menyelami respons dan intervensi oleh pihak kerajaan dan pertubuhan bukan kerajaan untuk meredakan kesan buruk konflik ini terhadap komuniti yang terjejas. Tambahan pula, kajian ini menerangkan strategi daya tahan dan penyesuaian yang digunakan oleh komuniti yang terjejas untuk menangani cabaran yang timbul akibat konflik peladang-penternak. Ia mengetengahkan inisiatif berasaskan komuniti, mekanisme penyelesaian konflik, dan usaha-usaha akar umbi yang bertujuan untuk mengembalikan keamanan dan kestabilan sosial-ekonomi. Dapatan kajian ini menekankan keperluan mendesak untuk strategi penyelesaian konflik yang mampan dan inisiatif pembangunan yang memberi keutamaan kepada kesejahteraan komuniti yang terjejas di negeri Kwara. Ia juga menyeru kepada pendekatan holistik yang melibatkan pihak berkepentingan pada pelbagai peringkat untuk menangani isu-isu yang rumit dan berkaitan yang timbul daripada konflik peladang-penternak. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada perbincangan berterusan mengenai pengurusan konflik, pembinaan keamanan, dan pembangunan sosial-ekonomi di negeri Kwara dan kawasan yang mengalami konflik serupa.

**Keywords:** Konflik Petani-Pengembala, Kesejahteraan Sosioekonomi, Kawasan Pemerintah Tempatan, Negeri Kwara, Penyelesaian Konflik;

## Introduction

Nigeria has had several conflicts throughout the years that have put its survival as a state and its ability to maintain its geographical integrity at risk. The most recent one is the increase in disputes between Fulani herders and farmers, which has escalated to a scorching point of worry in Nigeria because of its pervasiveness and degree of brutality. Despite having similar occupations, sedentary crop farmers and nomadic herders have developed a horrifying and dramatic level of hostility that has resulted in widespread murdering, maiming, and plunder, driving the farmers from their ancestral territories. From an economic standpoint, Nigeria's political and socioeconomic development, as well as the human development index, have been seriously jeopardised by the strained

relationship between the herders and farmers (Awotokun et al., 2020).

Olabode and Ajibade (2010) report that a study of environmentally generated conflict in Kwara State reveals that many farmers are engaged in the cultivation of guinea corn, yams, and other crops beneficial to cattle, particularly during the dry season. To avoid the expense of preservation before marketing, farmers frequently leave the harvests on the farm for too long, especially the late crops, to allow for thorough drying. Because of the attraction of grazing cattle, crops are destroyed, which leads to conflicts between crop growers and animal herders. Herders are allowed a temporary right of settlement in many villages in Nigeria. However, they frequently overstay this right and demand an equal right of tenure and exploitation, leading to conflict erupting in

practically all of the federation's states (Dimelu et al., 2016).

Between 2017 and 2 May 2020, there were 654 attacks carried out by Fulani herdsmen, which resulted in 2,539 fatalities and 253 kidnappings in Nigeria's conflict between farmers and herders. Additionally, several people were relocated during the procedure (ThisDay, 2020). Kwara State has faced persistent issues stemming from conflicts between farmers and herders. These conflicts have presented substantial barriers to the advancement of socioeconomic development in the region. Rooted in competition over resources such as land and water, these conflicts have profound and multifaceted effects on Kwara State's social fabric and economic progress. The conflicts disrupt agricultural activities, lead to community displacement, and tragically result in loss of life and property (Ibrahim, 2021).

Kwara State, like many regions in Nigeria, grapples with recurring farmer-herder conflicts that have far-reaching consequences for its residents. The persistent conflicts between farmers and herders have raised significant concerns in various regions, including Kwara State, Nigeria. These conflicts, characterized by disputes over land use, access to resources, and cultural differences, have had multifaceted impacts on the socioeconomic well-being of communities in the state (Olademo et al., 2021). However, there is a limited comprehensive appraisal of these effects, especially at the local government level. This knowledge gap hinders the development of informed policies and interventions to mitigate the adverse consequences of such conflicts. Therefore, this review seeks to address this gap by appraising the effects of farmers-herders conflicts on the socioeconomic well-being of selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) within Kwara State. Through a critical examination of existing literature and empirical studies, this review aims to identify the vital socioeconomic challenges communities face in these conflict-affected LGAs and highlight the significance of understanding and addressing these challenges for sustainable development and conflict resolution in the state.

In this review on the effects of farmers-herders conflicts in the affected LGAs of Kwara State, it is crucial to emphasise its significance. These conflicts have profound local and national implications, considering their frequency and impact on communities.

Existing knowledge gaps underscore the need for a comprehensive assessment of their socioeconomic consequences. Additionally, this review can shed light on humanitarian concerns, including displacement and access to essential services, especially for vulnerable groups. Importantly, the findings may inform policies, interventions, and conflict resolution strategies, benefiting both the affected communities and broader security efforts in Nigeria. By empowering local stakeholders and contributing to the existing body of knowledge, this review aims to make a meaningful impact in addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by farmers-herders conflicts.

This study focuses on thoroughly evaluating the effect of farmer-herder disputes on the socioeconomic prosperity of the affected Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Kwara State. The goals include reviewing and synthesising the body of research and literature on these conflicts, examining the key socioeconomic indicators impacted by them, and offering policymakers and stakeholders insights and recommendations on how to reduce their negative effects and advance socioeconomic development and peace in the chosen LGAs of Kwara State.

## **Historical Overview of Farmers-Herders Conflicts in Kwara State**

### *Brief History and Causes*

One of the significant societal upheavals Nigeria is dealing with is the battle between farmers and herdsmen. The violence has claimed lives in numerous states across the nation and ruined property worth billions of dollars. According to Ahmed-Gamgum (2018), the violence was made possible by the Fulani ethnic group's sense of ethnic security. Ahmed-Gamgum adds that Fulanis began to feel unsafe in their hometowns and started moving to neighbourhoods. This was displacement on its own, brought on by internal angst and emotion. As a result, when the Fulanis were forced to leave their homes, the host communities felt uneasy, which sparked confrontation.

Prior to colonialism, Fulanis were inhabitants of the Sahel and semi-arid regions of the Futa-Jalon Mountains in West Africa. They are mainly nomads who raise livestock. Herdsmen, the majority of whom are Fulanis,

were forced to relocate to the savannah and tropical forest regions of Southern West Africa and far northern Nigeria because of climate change and population growth. There was again another displacement.

Fasona and Omojola (2005) discovered that farmer herdsman conflicts in Nigeria between 1991 and 2005 accounted for 35% of the significant fights reported by particular Nigerian media. A 2005 research by Nyong and Fiki (2006) of 27 communities in Central Nigeria revealed that over 40% of the households examined had dealt with disputes over agricultural land, with respondents recalling disputes from as recently as 2005 and as recently as 1965. These conflicts result in severe losses for both sides and have broad-reaching consequences.

Out of 150 families questioned in the Guinea savannah region of Nigeria, which includes Kwara State, 22 reported losing an entire farm's worth of standing crops, 41 reported losing cattle, and eight homes on both sides reported losing people, according to Fiki and Lee (2004). According to an additional study, a significant number of the violent clashes led to the damage of businesses, barns, houses, and household goods. Serious health dangers are additionally presented when cattle grow close to the water sources rural inhabitants use. The State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) of the Kwara State Government, as published by the State Planning Commission (KWSPC 2005), calls for a 20% increase in the area under cultivation and grain yields from the current 0.99 to 2.5 metric tonnes per hectare. Negedu (2005) found that more than 90% of farmers interviewed claimed that cattle rearers encroaching on their farms was their top difficulty in a study of barriers to cassava production in Kwara State. According to the Fulani cattle herders, disputes over land use are the "most critical" problem they face in their line of work (Hooft, 2005).

Hence, the continuing conflict between Nigerian farmers and Fulani herdsman has resulted in significant loss of life and property. Fulani displacement, driven by ethnic insecurity and climate change, has exacerbated the situation. Between 1991 and 2005, these conflicts accounted for a substantial portion of reported clashes, often centring on disputes over agricultural land. Such conflicts led to devastating losses, including human casualties, crop damage, and cattle losses, with serious economic and health implications. This raises doubts

about achieving the Nigerian government's agricultural growth targets.

## Evolution of Conflict Dynamics

In recent years, conflicts over grazing pasture have led to clashes between pastoral and farming populations more frequently in portions of central and northern Nigeria. Some analysts have blamed increasing desertification for the trend, which drives herders southward in search of pasture and frequently conflicts with farmers (Olabode & Ajibade, 2010).

Historically, and until the First Republic era of 1965 in Nigeria, a relatively harmonious relationship existed between farmers (agriculturalists) and herders (pastoralists). Farmers supplied grains and other agricultural products to sustain the herders' livestock, while the herders reciprocated by providing farmers with valuable manure for fertilising their fields. This mutually beneficial coexistence stemmed from farmers primarily cultivating crops and herders focused on animal husbandry, resulting in minimal conflicts between the two groups. During this period, Nigeria had a relatively small population, and the number of individuals engaged in agricultural activities for sustenance and commerce was limited. The combination of a small farming community, a sparse population, and vast uncultivated lands allowed herders to roam with their cattle freely.

However, as Nigeria's population steadily increased over time and more lands were brought under cultivation, the traditional routes used by herders for open grazing were gradually occupied by farmers. This encroachment on the herders' grazing areas led to conflicts and clashes between farmers and herders, resulting in the loss of lives and property. Subsequent governments in Nigeria, following the First Republic, failed to enforce grazing reserve laws, exacerbating the situation (Ndagi, 2019; Ndagi, 2019). Consequently, these clashes and conflicts arose from the competition for limited and dwindling resources, including arable land, grasslands, and water sources for livestock, by both farmers and herders (Ofem & Bassey, 2014).

Due to the nomads' presence and their cattle, there have been violent clashes in numerous villages around the country. Due to the nomads' audacity in shepherding their herds to graze on the vegetation that is present along their route, as well as the language and cultural

barriers that distinguish them as outsiders, the host communities frequently oppose them. This has led to an unpleasant competition between farmers and herdsman that has resulted in bloodshed, fatalities, and property damage (Nweze, 2005).

In various Nigerian states, including Kwara, Plateau, Nassarawa, Benue, Kogi, Kastina, Kaduna, Edo, Taraba, Delta, Enugu, Abia, Ebonyi, Ondo, Oyo, Osun, and many more, tensions and clashes between nomads and natives are discussed in the article. These conflicts arise when nomadic herders assault and kill numerous residents during a competition for grazing areas and water, which sparks retaliatory attacks. The report also mentions how entire towns are branded as terrorists, insurgents, or bandits and how many community members—mostly farmers—are killed off. In contrast, others lucky enough to flee are now refugees in other countries.

Over a decade, there has been a rise in farmer-herder conflict, with geographic hotspots in Nigeria, central Mali, and northern Burkina Faso. The paper underscores the significance of comprehending the regional and local elements that have contributed to violent results and emphasises that most farmer-herder conflicts are settled amicably. It was concluded that the ongoing disputes and clashes between nomads and indigenous people threaten both groups' ability to continue as a society and call for an all-encompassing strategy to resolve the current problems (Adebisi et al., 2020).

### **Socioeconomic Impact of Farmers-herders conflicts**

The conflicts have had repercussions for farmers and herdsman at various levels. These clashes decreased food and animal production for both groups, causing food scarcity. They also led to the displacement of farmers and herdsman, escalating tensions and fostering volatile inter-group relations between them. The conflicts resulted in the loss of lives, homes, other properties, and crops. Furthermore, they contributed to increased commodity prices, the loss of cattle, and a surge in meat prices (Odalonu, 2020).

The violent conflict between sedentary agrarian communities in the central and southern zones of Nigeria and nomadic herders from the north has been singled out as having a significant socioeconomic impact on the country's citizens and the potential to stymie future

growth if efforts are not swiftly directed to provide a long-term solution to the menace (Dollani, 2014).

Due to the detrimental effects of these disputes and the federal government's unworkable policies regarding food production and importation, the costs of basic goods and food products have increased, making them unaffordable for the average person. For instance, the price of rice has been rising to historic highs of N21,000 per bag (50 kg), which has caused alarm among citizens nationwide. The ongoing problems of the average person have been made worse by the persistent price increases of other basic goods like fish, bread, pork, cereals, poultry, yams, onions, beans, vegetable oil, tomatoes, groundnut oil, and others (Tersoo, 2016).

### **Conflict Resolution Mechanisms and Interventions**

Different conflict management techniques have been used, like any other type of conflict that calls for the assistance of civil society organisations. However, the problem only worsens as time goes on. Like previous conflicts in Nigeria, several conflict management techniques have been utilised, such as negotiation, mediation, litigation, conciliation, arbitration, and alternative dispute resolution. Traditional conflict resolution techniques are typically used at the community level to resolve disagreements between individuals and groups (Tehrani & Yamini, 2020). Conflict management aims to turn a harmful situation into a productive one. Conflict management is anticipated to address and eliminate activities that lead to violence, leaving it to be resolved at the political level. There is widespread concern that the herder-farmer dispute is becoming more harmful because the administrative branch lacks the political will to confront it practically. In some regions of Africa, using traditional conflict management techniques to settle disputes has long been a tradition, mainly when they include land disputes (Dimelu et al., 2016).

Traditional dispute-resolution techniques are developed within each community's sociopolitical framework and have been sculpted and reshaped by the reality of every African society due to pricey and lack of trust in the legal system. As stated by (Aganah, 2023), traditional conflict management mechanisms encompass institutions and processes that have organically evolved within pre-modern societal structures in the global south and have been practised over extended periods. Essentially, communities have autonomously developed methods for conflict management at the local level, often relying on the authority of clan leaders and facilitated through traditional courts or community assemblies. Scholars argue that these traditional approaches have

historically played a significant role in addressing various social and resource-related conflicts dating back to the pre-colonial era (Appiah-Thompson, 2020). Such mechanisms and processes have arisen from the recognition that communities frequently contend with conflicts stemming from conflicting interests in using environmental resources (Festus FIPMD, 2020; Ide et al., 2023).

In traditional conflict management, elders endeavour to safeguard social cohesion against rupture or work towards restoring broken ties caused by actions contrary to community norms, culture, or values. In such contexts, measures like compensation for the affected party or sanctions against wrongdoers are aimed at restoring harmony and repairing relationships rather than seeking retribution (Faregh et al., 2021). Several scholars have observed that traditional mechanisms prioritise establishing rules and norms governing the equitable utilisation of common resources to promote sustainable use and mitigate user conflicts (Appiah-Thompson, 2020). For instance, Tamariz and Baumannn(2022) elucidate this in Nigeria, where methods such as hospitality meetings are employed. During these meetings, traditional leaders, including heads of families, clans, communities, neighbours, or traditional healers, serve as mediators to negotiate peaceful coexistence and agreements on resource utilisation between farmers and herders. Importantly, when conflicts arise between farmers and herders, resulting in crop damage or injuries, mediation occurs, and compensations may be offered to the aggrieved party. However, the objective is to uphold social order and maintain harmonious relations (Faure, 2000; Boege, 2006).

According to Ikezue and Ezeah (2017), traditional conflict management techniques were employed in Africa in the past, even before colonialism, and are preferable to those currently used. They continued by saying that they thought the primary goal of employing the conventional conflict management technique was to identify the source of the problem and address it amicably before it became more serious. According to Chikaire et al. (2018), the traditional chiefs, religious leaders, town unions, Miyetti Allah, police, courts, the military, and local government are among the institutional mechanisms used to manage the herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria, particularly in Imo state. The two fighting parties still favour arbitration, but to maintain their relationships, they prefer to handle disputes informally rather than in court or at the police station.

Chikaire et al. (2018) claimed that peace committees, communication, mediation, accommodation, avoidance, amicable resource allocation, mediation, compensation, law enforcement officials, and traditional rulers have all

been used as conflict management strategies in the Imo state. However, challenges to the effectiveness of conflict management mechanisms include lack of funding for maintaining conflict management committees, lack of constitutional authority by peace committees, ignorance, dissension among committee members, refusal to pay compensation by offenders, disregard for the conflict management team, corrupt nature of community/nomad leaders, and uncontrollable attitude by the youth, among others.

Maliki et al. (2019) claimed that in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Mali, Somali, Tchad, Zimbabwe, and Mali, farmer-herder agro-pastoral conflict management is a permanent training process comprising confidence, negotiation, and conciliation. Further, Maliki et al. (2019) suggested that the availability of fodder, respect for transhumance corridors, a functional local committee led by persons of influence, and communication between the interest groups are elements that impact the success of the conflict management strategies implemented. The Federal government's adoption of a ten-year national livestock transformation plan failed owing to a lack of trust between the two parties because the herders believed that ranches, as well as grazing reserves, might not be helpful for their herding system, as indicated by Nextier SPD (2021). This is because the herders perceive that ranches and grazing reserves might need to be more useful for their herding system.

Contrastingly, the farmers perceived the initiative as an attempt to acquire their land. According to Nextier SPD (2021), civil society organisations and other international development actors have been actively implementing programs to facilitate peaceful coexistence between the two parties. However, these efforts fell short due to their exclusive reliance on community-based conflict management mechanisms, which overlooked the underlying economic and climatic factors driving the conflict in the first place.

Kehinde (2014) pointed out that the formal conflict management mechanisms used to address herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria, although specialised and impartial, proved time-consuming and ineffective when disputes between the two agricultural groups were brought to the police or the court for litigation. His analysis, which examined the roles of traditional rulers, the police, and the courts, yielded varying outcomes, markedly missing the crucial insights into the conflict management methods employed by community leaders. In a study conducted by Mohammed et al. (2017) to explore the functions of traditional institutions in conflict management in Borno state, it was argued that traditional institutions played a considerable role in conflict resolution, with a significant percentage of respondents expressing satisfaction with this approach.

From the perspective of Bwala & Ogirima (2020), who considered the herders' point of view, they argued that traditional institutions, the police, local authorities, courts, compensation systems, and cattle breeders' associations have been involved in managing herder-farmer conflicts but have failed to find a viable solution. In contrast, Tari (2021), while assessing conflict management mechanisms employed in herder-farmer conflicts in North Central Nigeria, offered an opposing view. Tari contended that a peace-building structure had succeeded via dialogue, mediation, psycho-social support, and trauma healing among the conflicting parties, indicating potential solutions to this protracted issue. Tari (2021) also acknowledged that farmers and herders had become frustrated with court processes, leading to vigilantism.

On the other hand, Audu & Yakubu (2022) posited that the Nigerian state's management of the resource conflict between herders and farmers involved various mechanisms, such as the creation of grazing reserves, the National Commission for Nomadic Education, the deployment of security agents, comprehensive livestock development plans, the Great Green Wall initiatives, the National Livestock Transformation Plan, the Rural Grazing Area Policy (RUGA), cattle colonies, and open grazing prohibition laws. However, none of these measures had successfully stemmed the tide of herder-farmer conflict. Audu and Yakubu (2022) also noted that government leaders' lack of political will at all levels, the politicisation of the conflict, and elite interests were significant hindrances. They further argued that the government's strategy of deploying security agents impeded managing the conflict due to widespread human rights violations. It is important to note that despite its thorough analysis, this paper did not investigate the roles of individual actors at the community level, particularly the community leaders responsible for maintaining law and order and sustaining peace within local communities (Adebajo & Adebajo, 2023).

Hence, based on the above findings, the conflict resolution mechanisms and interventions presented in this section encompass a wide array of approaches to address the complex herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria. These mechanisms include traditional conflict resolution techniques, the involvement of various institutional mechanisms, and efforts by civil society organisations, as well as government initiatives. Despite the multitude of approaches, the conflicts persist due to various challenges, including a lack of funding, constitutional authority issues, corruption, and an uncontrollable attitude among the youth.

While some studies suggest that traditional institutions play a crucial role in conflict resolution and shed light on the shortcomings of specific conflict

management methods like litigation, the lack of political will and the politicisation of the conflict present significant roadblocks to its resolution. Notably, the roles of community leaders in these conflict-resolution mechanisms have not been fully explored. The complexities of the conflict, entwined with issues of identity, ethnicity, religion, and politics, compound the challenge of finding effective and enduring solutions. However, the hurdles in implementing these strategies, ranging from funding constraints to issues of authority and internal dissension among committee members, are prominently underscored. This study uncovered some knowledge gaps, which include the need for a more comprehensive investigation of the roles and effectiveness of community leaders, a comparative analysis of conflict management techniques, a deeper exploration of the root causes of conflicts, comprehensive impact assessments, an understanding of the inclusivity of conflict resolution processes, strategies for long-term sustainability, the legal framework, and international perspectives. Addressing these gaps would enhance our comprehension of herder-farmer conflict dynamics and facilitate the development of more effective and enduring conflict resolution strategies. Thus, the current study underscores the imperative for a holistic approach that addresses the underlying causes of these conflicts and highlights community leaders' pivotal role in upholding local peace.

## Overview of the Chosen Local Government Areas

Kwara State is situated between 2°73' and 6°13'E and 8°05' and 10°15'N. Its total area is about 34,500 square kilometres, and it is made up of rainforest in the south and woody savannah in the state's greater region. It has 16 local government areas. Rainfall has an annual range of 1,000–1,500 mm and an average maximum temperature between 30 and 35 °C (Olademo et al., 2021).

Oke-Ero, one of the 16 Local Government Areas within Kwara State, is centered in Iloffa, situated at Latitude 8°05'36.3"N and Longitude 5°08'32.4"E. In addition to Iloffa, other prominent towns in Oke-Ero include Ekan-Nla, Ayedun, Idofin, Kajola, Ilale, Erin Mope, Imode, Idofin Odo-Ase, Odoowa, and Egosi, with an area of 438 km<sup>2</sup>. Oke-Ero experiences an average annual temperature of 24.7 °C and receives an average annual rainfall of 1281 mm. The driest month is typically January, with only 9 mm of precipitation, while September tends to have the highest average precipitation of 237 mm, accompanied by an average temperature of 27.0°C. On the other hand, March is recognized as the warmest month, while August registers

as the coldest month, with average temperatures of 22.6°C (Agboola et al., 2020).

Edu LGA was considered among the study location because it has very large pastoralist settlements and is one of the largest area for cattle production in Kwara State. Rice, sugarcane and melon are the major crops planted (Elelu et al., 2016). The severity of the conflict within Kwara State, the focus of this study, necessitates immediate remedial action to mitigate the recurring conflicts that result in the displacement of local farmers from their lands, as well as causing loss of life and crops (Olademo et al., 2021). The choice of the study locations was based on its economic dependence on agriculture, which has been significantly affected by prolonged Farmers-Fulanis' conflicts. Additionally, the selection of the areas was guided by the occurrence and persistence of conflicts between the farmers and herders in those parts of Kwara State.

Asa Local Government Area, is situated in Kwara State, with its administrative center in the town of Afon. This local government falls under the central senatorial district of Kwara State and encompasses a total land area of 1286 km<sup>2</sup>, yielding an average population density of 130.9 individuals per square kilometer. Asa LGA shares its borders with Moro LGA to the north, Ilorin West and Ifelodun to the east, Oyun Local Government to the south, and is bounded by Oyo State to the west. This local government is divided into 17 wards. In 2006, the population of Asa Local Government was reported at 124,668, covering 62,751 males and 61,917 females. A subsequent census in 2016 indicated a population increase of 3.05%, resulting in a total population of 168,300 for that year (Salami et al., 2020).

Ifelodun Local Government Area, situated within Kwara State, holds the distinction of being the largest local government area in Kwara State and is geographically positioned between latitudes 8024'41 and 8025'44N of the equator, as well as longitudinally between 04035'35 and 4035'02E to the east of the Greenwich meridian. Comprising nine districts, Ifelodun had a recorded population of 206,042 during the 2006 census, according to NPC (2006) data. It spans an expansive area of 3,435 km<sup>2</sup>. The region experiences an annual rainfall that typically falls within the 1000 to 1500 mm range. Temperature levels vary from an average maximum of 300 °C to 350 °C, while humidity levels fluctuate between 35% and 60%. Agriculture is the predominant source of livelihood and occupation among the local population, and its agricultural practices are deeply rooted in tradition. The cultivation of crops such as sorghum, cassava, yam, maize, and melon has been a historical mainstay (Tunde, 2019).

## Analysis of Case Studies of Conflict Impact

Olabode and Ajibade (2010) reported that a substantial portion of farmers in Oke Ero LGA of Kwara State engage in the cultivation of crops such as guinea corn, maize, and yam, which possess significant nutritional importance for cattle, particularly during the dry season. Regrettably, farmers frequently leave these crops unattended for extended periods, especially the late-season ones, to facilitate natural drying and minimize the expenses associated with preservation before marketing. This practice, however, draws grazing cattle to the fields, leading to crop destruction and subsequently sparking conflicts between livestock herders and crop cultivators.

The town of Igbaja, situated in the Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State, experienced significant agricultural disruption. According to reports, several farms in the community were destroyed because of herder encroachments. These incursions led to conflicts between local farmers and the herders. The Sahara Report (2021) provides a visual account of the challenges and conflicts arising from such encroachments, emphasizing the tangible impact on local agriculture and livelihoods.

On the 20th of May 2021, as reported by The Punch, a violent confrontation occurred in Kpada village, located in the Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State. The clash involved Fulani and Nupe youths and resulted in the reported deaths of two individuals, with several others sustaining injuries. The catalyst for this clash was an incident in which cows belonging to the Fulani community allegedly destroyed a rice farm owned by a local farmer in the village. This altercation underscores the inherent tensions surrounding farmer-herder conflicts and the potential for violence when disputes over agricultural activities and livestock arise (The Punch, 2021).

On the 8th of January 2022, a violent clash was narrowly averted in the Alapa community, situated within the Asa local government area of Kwara State. The incident revolved around a suspected Fulani herder who had led his cattle to graze on a cassava farm owned by local farmers. This incited a dispute that quickly escalated into a violent confrontation. The clash saw the unrestricted use of dangerous weapons, including



cutlasses and knives, resulting in varying degrees of injuries among those involved.

The intervention of the Agro Ranger Unit of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps brought the situation under control. Presently, ongoing investigations are being conducted to ascertain both the immediate and remote causes of the incident and establish measures to prevent any potential acts of reprisal. This episode is a stark reminder of the persisting farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria, with focal points in the northwestern, Middle Belt, and, more recently, southern states (Tribune, 2022).

On the 12th of January 2023, a fatal incident unfolded in Eshijiko, located within the Pada district of the Pategi Local Government Area in Kwara State. This violent clash pitted members of the Fulani and Nupe communities against each other, resulting in grave consequences. During the confrontation, a farmer lost his life, approximately 500 houses were laid to waste, and a considerable number of residents were displaced. Furthermore, numerous settlements in the vicinity were subjected to destruction as part of this communal conflict.

The aftermath of this distressing event also saw the displacement of several Fulani herdsmen from their habitual settlements. Additionally, the clash substantially harmed local agriculture, with valuable crops such as guinea corn, maize, and cassava being adversely affected. The intensity of the conflict prompted some herdsmen to flee the community, driven by the fear of potential reprisals (The Punch, 2023).

Hence, based on the above incidents and report, several incidents in Kwara State, documented in various reports, show ongoing conflicts between different groups, mainly involving Fulani herdsmen and local farmers, resulting in deaths, injuries, property damage, and community displacement. These events emphasize the pressing need for effective regional conflict resolution and management.

## Recommendations and Future Research Directions

Future studies in the studied region should focus on understanding the root causes of conflicts between herdsmen and crop cultivators, particularly in Kwara State, and identifying strategies to mitigate these tensions. Research should also examine these conflicts' economic

and social impacts on local communities. It is crucial to assess the effectiveness of current conflict resolution mechanisms and propose improvements where necessary. Also, there is a need for ongoing monitoring and data collection to provide a better understanding of the evolving nature of these conflicts and inform timely interventions.

This study recommends coping mechanisms and conflict management strategies, which include promoting community dialogues and conflict mediation initiatives that involve all stakeholders, such as farmers, herdsmen, and local authorities, to foster understanding and peaceful coexistence. Encouraging sustainable agricultural practices that reduce the attractiveness of farmlands to grazing cattle during critical crop growth stages is essential. This could involve community-driven initiatives to protect crops while ensuring cattle's nutritional needs are met. Finally, raising awareness and sensitizing communities on the importance of peaceful coexistence and the long-term benefits of conflict resolution can contribute to reducing tensions in the region.

## Conclusion

The herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria have caused significant upheaval, resulting in the loss of lives and properties worth billions of dollars. These conflicts are primarily driven by factors such as Fulani herdsmen's displacement, climate change, and population growth, leading to societal disruptions, including crop destruction, home and cattle damage, and loss of human lives, exacerbating commodity prices and food scarcity. Despite various conflict resolution tools and interventions, conflicts persist due to political inertia, politicization, elite interests, and complexity. Local leaders play a crucial role in peace preservation, though their responsibilities and effectiveness are under-researched. Urgent action is needed, particularly in Kwara State, to address the conflicts' socio-economic and political consequences and promote sustainable peace, requiring comprehensive approaches beyond conventional methods, considering identity, resource scarcity, religion, and politics. Community leaders' involvement in conflict resolution is vital, highlighting the need for immediate action to mitigate conflicts and ensure sustainable peace in affected regions.

## References

Adebajo, A. A. (2018). *Pastoralist-farmer Conflict Management and Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Benue and Nasarawa States, Nigeria* [Master's thesis, Department of Political Science and

Public Administration, Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State].

Adebajo, A. A., & Adebajo, A. O. (2023). Community Leaders and Management of Pastoralist-Farmer Conflicts in Benue and Nasarawa States, Nigeria. *Journal of Community Development Research (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 16(1), 13–26.

Adebisi, L. O., Adebisi, O. A., Opakunle, A. A., Asogwa, U. G., Farayola, C. O., & Daodu, T. O. (2020). Effect of Farmer-Herdsman Conflict on Poverty Status of Farming Households in Kwara State, Nigeria. *Cercetari Agronomice in Moldova*, 53(2), 195–206. <https://doi.org/10.46909/cerce-2020-017>

Aganah, G. M. A. (2023). The Role of Local Agency in Peacebuilding: The Case of the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee. *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 30(1).

Agboola, A. A., Adeogun, B. K., & Ajibike, M. A. (2020). Determination of an Annual Groundwater Recharge and Demand in Oke-Ero LGA, Kwara State, Nigeria. *FUOYE Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 5(1), 2018–2021. <https://doi.org/10.46792/fuoyejt.v5i1.471>

Ahmed-Gamgum, W. A. (2018). Herdsmen and farmers conflict in Nigeria: Another dimension of insecurity. *Journal of Public Administration and Social Welfare Research*, 3(1), 35–62. [www.iiardpub.org](http://www.iiardpub.org)

Appiah-Thompson, C. (2020). The concept of peace, conflict and conflict transformation in African religious philosophy. *Journal of Peace Education*, 17(2), 161–185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2019.1688140>

Awotokun, K., Nwozor, A., & Olanrewaju, J. S. (2020). Conflicts and the Retrogression of Sustainable Development: the Political Economy of Herders-Farmers' Conflicts in Nigeria. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, 8(1), 624–633. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2020.8175>

Dimelu, M. U., Salifu, E. D., & Igbokwe, E. M. (2016). Resource use conflict in agrarian communities, management and challenges: A case of farmer-herdsmen conflict in Kogi State, Nigeria. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 46, 147–154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2016.06.011>

Dollani, P. (2014). *The quest for quality management in albanian public administration - the case of caf method at tipa*. January 2012.

Elelu, N., Ambali, A., Coles, G. C., & Eisler, M. C. (2016). Cross-sectional study of *Fasciola gigantica* and other trematode infections of cattle in Edu Local Government Area, Kwara State, north-central Nigeria. *Parasites and Vectors*, 9(1), 1–11.

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13071-016-1737-5>

Faregh, S. A., Saffari, Y., & Sisi, M. J. (2021). The impact of gamification on the teaching and learning process of conflict management. *Technology of Education Journal*, 15(4), 657–672.

Fasona, M. J., & Omojola, a S. (2005). Climate Change , Human Security and Communal Clashes in Nigeria. *Huma Security and Climate Change*, June, 21–23. <https://doi.org/10.13140/2.1.2218.5928>

Festus FIPMD, P. (2020). Conflict Management and Conflict Management Skills Needed in Educational Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Research E-ISSN*, 6(4), 2020. [www.iiardpub.org](http://www.iiardpub.org)

Fiki C, Lee B 2004. Conflict Generation, Conflict Management and Self-organizing Capabilities in Drought-prone Rural Communities in North-eastern Nigeria: A case study. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 19(2), 25-48

Hooft, K. van't. (2005). Exploring Endogenous Livestock Development in Cameroon. In *Development* (Issue June).

Ibrahim, A. K. (2021). Youth Violence And Socio-Economic Development In Baboko Community Of Ilorin, Kwara State Nigeria. *Ilorin Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 23(1), 101.

Ide, T., Johnson, M. F., Barnett, J., Krampe, F., Le Billon, P., Maertens, L., von Uexkull, N., & Vélez-Torres, I. (2023). The Future of Environmental Peace and Conflict Research. *Environmental Politics*, 32(6), 1077–1103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2022.2156174>

Ndagi, S. S. and A. N. (2019). Ruga Settlements: A Strategy For Socio-Economic Activities And Conflict Resolution Among Farmers/Herders In Nigeria. *Lapai International Journal Of Management And Social Sciences*, 11(2), 358–375.

Nyong, A., Fiki, C. O., & McLeman, R. (2006). Drought-related conflicts, management and resolution in the West African Sahel: Considerations for climate change research. *Erde*, 137(3), 223–248.

Odalonu, B. H. (2020). Appraisal of the Political and Socio-Economic Effects of Farmers-Herders Conflict in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, 10(3), 367–394.

Ofem, O. O., & Basse, I. (2014). Livelihood and conflict dimension among crop farmers and Fulani herdsmen in Yakurr region of Cross River State.

*Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(8), 512–519. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n8p512>

Olabode A.D. and Ajibade, L. T. (2010). Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 12(7), 233–239.

Olademo, Oyeronke., Abubakre, Samiat Olúbùnmi., Adebisi, Aliy AbdulWahid., Fahm, AbdulGafar., Omotoye, R. W., Ikibe, Solomon O., Ibraheem, I. O., Tijani, Y. O., Adimula, R. A. (2021). Internal Mechanisms As Tools For Conflict Resolution: A Case Study On Share-Tsaragi, Nigeria. *ALORE:Ilorin Journal of the Humanities*, 30(2021), 102–121. <https://uilspace.unilorin.edu.ng/handle/20.500.12484/7387>

Olademo, O., Omotoye, R. W., Ikibe, S. O., Ibraheem, L. O., Tijani, Y. O., Abubakre, S. O., Adebisi, A. A., Aboyeji, A. J., Fahm, A. O., & Adimula, R. A. (2021). Internal mechanisms as tools for conflict resolution: A case study on Share-Tsaragi, Nigeria. *Heliyon*, 7(1), e05974. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e05974>

Sahara Report (2021) <https://saharareporters.com/2021/02/03/fulani-herdsmen-destroyed-our-farms-kwara-community-cries-out-video>

Salami, M., Fateru, B., Osasona, K., & Abdulsalam, N. (2020). Gender analysis of maize production in Asa Local Government area of Kwara State, Nigeria. *Agricultura - Revistă de Știință Și Practică Agricolă*, 113(1/2), 131–144. <https://www.cabdirect.org/cabdirect/abstract/20219821112>

Tamariz, G., & Baumann, M. D. (2022). Agrobiodiversity change in violent conflict and post-conflict landscapes. *Geoforum*, 128(November 2021), 217–222. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2021.11.010>

Tehrani, H. D., & Yamini, S. (2020). Personality traits and conflict resolution styles: A meta-analysis. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 157(October 2019), 109794. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.109794>

Tersoo, I. (2016). *An assessment of the impact of farmers- herder's conflict on food security in benue state, nigeria*. 6(2), 187–200.

Tunde, A. M. (2019). Determinants of Watermelon Production and its impact on the farmers in Ifelodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria. *Ruhuna Journal of Science*, 10(2), 149. <https://doi.org/10.4038/rjs.v10i2.80>

Thisday (2020) 'Report: Fulani Herdsmen Killed 2,539 Nigerians in 654 Attacks'.

<https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/06/07/report-fulani-herdsmen-killed-2539-nigerians-in-654-attacks/>.

The Punch (2021). <https://punchng.com/two-killed-as-fulani-nupe-farmers-clash-in-kwara/>.

The Punch (2023). <https://punchng.com/farmer-killed-settlements-razed-in-kwara-communal-clash/>.

Tribune (2022). <https://tribuneonlineng.com/many-injured-as-civil-defence-prevents-bloody-farmer-herder-clash-in-kwara/>.