

An Empirical Phenomenological Psychological Study of Farmer-herdsmen Conflicts in North-Central Nigeria

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Abstract: *Importunate farmer-herdsmen conflicts in Nigeria portend serious socioeconomic consequences. Using the Empirical Phenomenological Psychological approach (EPP-approach), the study is a qualitative analysis of farmer-herdsmen conflicts. Research sample consisted of thirty farmers and twelve herdsmen, selected using a multi-stage cluster random sampling technique. Hermeneutic interview technique was used to elicit data from respondents. Data analysis revealed twenty-two categories, which resulted in four themes namely: causes of conflict, experiences, coping responses, and management perspectives. Although there was no consensus on the causes of conflicts, inadequate knowledge of stock routes, depleting soil fertility, and the need to increase scale of operation by both groups increased the potential for conflicts. Both groups exhibited differing conflict experiences and responses, but exhibited willingness to find lasting solution to the conflicts. Major recommendations include increased awareness, compliance and periodic revision of stock routes; and better coping mechanisms among both parties. It is also imperative to set up farmer-herdsmen conflict management at community, local, state, and federal government levels.*

Keywords: *Farmer-herdsmen conflicts, Causes, Management, EPP-approach*

1. Introduction

Conflict in resource use is not uncommon and perhaps not unnatural in human ecosystems. Moore (2005) noted that conflict *per se*, is not bad: it is perhaps a necessity in the evolution and development of human organizations. But when conflicts degenerate to violent, destructive clashes, they become not only unhealthy but also counter productive and progress-threatening. Nyong and Fiki (2005) pointed out that resource-related conflicts are responsible for over 12

percent declines in per capita food production in sub-Saharan Africa.

Competition-driven conflicts between arable crop farmers and cattle herdsman have become common occurrences in many parts of Nigeria. In a newspaper study of crisis in Nigeria between 1991 and February 2005, Fasona and Omojola (2005) found that conflicts over agricultural land use between farmers and herdsman accounted for 35 percent of all reported crises. Politico-religious and ethnic clashes occurred at lower frequencies. Another study of 27 communities in North Central Nigeria showed that over 40% of the households surveyed had experienced agricultural land related conflicts, with respondents recalling conflicts that were as far back as 1965 and as recent as 2005 (Nyong and Fiki, 2005). De Haan (2002) observed that no less than twenty villages were involved in farmer-herdsman conflicts annually in the states covered by his study. Nyong and Fiki's (2005) study found a spatial differentiation in conflict occurrence, as more violent conflicts took place more frequently in resource-rich areas like the *Fadama* (flood plains) and river valleys than resource-poor areas.

The Fulani cattle herdsman have identified conflicts arising from land use as the "most important" problem they face in their occupation (van't Hooft, Millar and Django, 2005). Describing the annual herding cycle of the Fulani cattle herdsman, Iro (1994) stated that the herding season begins with southward movement of the herd and along rivers and stream valleys from October to December – marking the end of rainy season and beginning of dry season. January to February is the harmattan season that is characterized by longer grazing hours, herd splitting, and more frequent visits to stable water sources. These thus increase southward movement of the herds. The months of March and April are usually the toughest for the herdsman and his cattle, as it is the hottest period in the grazing calendar. Indeed, he now herds his cattle only in the evenings and nights (Riesman, 1977). May and June signify the end of dry season and vegetation begins to appear. This also marks the beginning of northward movement of cattle herds. From this period up till September, which is the peak of rainy season, though characterized by cattle-breeding, more milk production and shorter grazing hours, cattle

herding coincides significantly with arable crop production. Farmer-herdsmen conflict therefore becomes prevalent during this period. The resultant increase in competition for arable land has often times led to serious manifestation of hostilities and social friction among the two user-groups in many parts of Nigeria. The conflicts have not only heightened the level of insecurity, but have also demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the food crisis in Nigeria and other affected countries due to loss of farmer lives, animals, crops and valuable properties (Cotula, Toulmin and Hesse, 2004). For instance, the conflict in Darfur region of Sudan started as a resource-based conflict between herdsmen and farmers before transforming into a full-blown war that has claimed over 200,000 lives and rendered over a million people homeless (FEWS-NET, 2007). Just as in The Sudan, farming and cattle-herding respectively are predominantly associated with distinct ethnic groups.

The threat to human security occasioned by these conflicts is quite real. Indeed, Fasona and Omojola (2005) showed that there appears to be a “very strong correlation” between the patterns of the clashes and human security. Human restiveness and communal clashes have become more prevalent in the savannahs where intensive and extensive crop production activities are particularly predominant around the flood plains. The cattle herdsmen are now being found in the south – the Guinea savannah and forest belt - in search of pasture for their herds (Oyesola, 2000; Ajuwon, 2004). Indeed, Ajuwon (2004) reported farmer-herdsmen conflict in Imo State, south east of Nigeria. In a study carried out in Nigeria’s Guinea savannah, Fiki and Lee (2004) reported that out of about 150 households interviewed, 22 reported loss of a whole farm of standing crops, 41 reported losses of livestock, while eight households from both sides reported loss of human lives. Their study also indicated that stores, barns, residences and household items were destroyed in many of the violent clashes. Serious health hazards are also introduced when cattle are reared to water bodies that serve rural communities.

The implications of all these may put question marks on the achievability of the 10% growth rate in the agricultural sector being proposed by the federal government of Nigeria. Neither would it be easy for the Kwara State

government to achieve 20% increase in area under actual cultivation nor grain yields from the present 0.99 to 2.5 metric tones per hectare being proposed in its State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) as released by the State Planning Commission (KWSPC, 2005). Conflicts resulting from the use of *Fadama* land may also jeopardize huge financial investment by government, Africa Development Bank and World Bank in the *Fadama* projects nationwide (Ardo, 2004).

The causes of farmer-herdsmen conflicts are often not far-fetched. However, there appears to be no consensus among both groups on the causes of their mutual conflict. According to de Haan (2002), while farmers cite destruction of crops by cattle and other property by the pastoralists as the main direct causes for conflicts cited, burning of rangelands and *Fadama* and blockage of stock routes and water points by crop encroachment are major direct reasons cited by the pastoralists. Bell (2000) described the role of what she referred to as 'meta conflict'- on going disagreement as to what the conflict itself is about, opining that until there is substantial agreement about the cause of the conflict, reaching agreement on how the divided society reconcile may be almost unattainable. An in-depth insight into the perceptions of conflict actors could thus be useful tool towards resolving farmer-herdsmen conflict. The present study is a qualitative phenomenological investigation of the perceptions and conflict experiences of arable crop farmers and cattle herdsmen in north-central Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Analyze the perceived causes of conflict among the participants - farmers and herdsmen
2. Examine the conflict experiences of participants
3. Analyze participants' responses to mutual conflicts
4. Examine the conflict management opinions of participants

2. Methodology

A five-stage technique was used by randomly selecting Kwara State from the list of six states that made up the

north-central geo-political zone in Nigeria. Kwara State is located in Latitude 7° 55' and 100° North and longitudes 2°20' East. Lying in the middle belt of Nigeria, the state has a land area of 32,500 km sq made of Guinea Savannah vegetation to the south and Derived Savannah to the North. There is also a Fadama belt that stretches the length and breadth of the River Niger. Annual rainfall is between 1000-1500mm while maximum average temperatures are between 30° and 35° Celsius (Kwara State Diary, 2007).

Agriculturally, the State is significant for food production in Nigeria because of its rich soil that supports the cultivation of many crops. The state has a cultivable land area of 2,447, 250ha (Kwara State Planning Commission, 2004). Similarly, it has abundant livestock that comprises of cattle, goats and sheep. Sharing boundaries with Ekiti, Oyo, Osun, Kogi, Niger State and the Republic of Benin, it has four main ethnic groups namely, Yoruba, Nupe, Baruba and Fulani.

Ten out of the 16 Local Government Areas in the state had history of frequent farmer-herdsmen conflicts. Two LGAs (Edu and Moro) associated with frequent conflicts were randomly selected. In each of the two selected LGAs, three farming communities and two herdsmen transit camp were randomly selected. From each of the selected communities, five farmers and three herdsmen respectively were selected using cluster random sampling technique. Thus, 30 farmers and 12 herdsmen were interviewed in the phenomenological data collection process.

Hermeneutic Phenomenological Interview Technique (HPIT) was used to gather data needed to achieve the objectives of this study. According to Lester (1998), Phenomenology involves gathering “deep” information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participant” (Lester, 1998 p.1). This method is particularly effective at pin-pointing the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives, and therefore at challenging structural or normative assumptions. Criticisms of phenomenology are that it generates a lot of papers, notes and audio tapes for analysis and that people may not understand what it is, expecting similar parameters to apply

as for quantitative research (Lester, 1998). It is however well appreciated that when the purpose is to illuminate the specific, identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation and inform policy and action, phenomenological methods are simply suitable (Plumer, 1983; Stanley & Wise, 1993; Moustakas, 1994; Mazeelle, 2002; Smith, 2003 and Lekoko, 2005). Reconnaissance surveys to the selected LGAs were conducted along with some trained enumerators and interpreters before data collection.

An interview guide made up of four questions relating to farmer-herdsmen conflicts was used in gathering in-depth data from the respondents. The questions were: (1) what are the causes of farmer-herdsmen conflicts? (2) What are your personal conflict experiences? (3) How do you normally respond to the conflicts? (4) What are the ways by which the conflicts can be managed? It was pre-tested with five farmers and one herdsman to ensure that the procedure and terminologies were appropriate to the prospective respondents. This yielded no need for a change in the designed interview guide and procedure. Each of the four questions was often followed by corollary questions without compromising strict adherence to the objectives of the research. The interviews, lasted between 20 and 30 minutes per participant, were conducted in two stages. The first stage was for the farmers, while the second featured the herdsman. Each interview was audio-recorded, followed by verbatim text transcriptions that constituted material for data analysis. Also, an interviewer-administered questionnaire was used to elicit some personal socioeconomic data on the respondents. For ethical reasons all participants were guaranteed anonymity.

3. Analysis of Phenomenological Data

The sample consisted of barely educated 30 farmers (18 men and 12 women), whose mean age, annual income, and household size were 44 years, USD 674.2, and 14 people respectively. Also, the mean farm size, and farming experience of the farmers were 2.8 Hectares and 13.7 years respectively. All the twelve herdsman were uneducated male,

whose mean age; annual income and household size were 26 years, USD 1355.95, and 9 people respectively. Their mean herd size and herding experience were 41 cattle 9.1 years respectively.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982; p.145), phenomenological data analysis entails “ working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned”. This research adapted the empirical phenomenological data analysis procedure developed by Karlsson (1993), and used by Giorgi (1997) and Friman, Nyberg and Norlander (2004). Consisting of hermeneutical elements, it essentially consists of five steps, which according to Norlander, Bloom, and Archer (2002) and Pramling, Norlander, and Archer (2001) may not be seen as strict rules and may be adapted according to the phenomenon under study. These steps which were solely undertaken and reviewed by the researchers are: verbatim transcription of the audio-taped interviews, reading the transcription of each participant to get a good understanding and feeling of the material, identification of ‘small units’, which are terminologically referred to as Meaning Units, MUs. The MUs are the salient issues or points that are raised by the participants (the number of participants that raise a particular issue is the MU), synthesis of the MUs into ‘situated structures’ which are essentially summary formats or categories, and collapsing of the categories\‘situated structures’ into more general themes, which form the pivots for the discussion of the findings.

4. Results and Discussions

The goal is to gain deeper insights into the conflict management opinions and personal experiences of respondents with regards to mutual conflict over use of agricultural land. Data analysis yielded 349 MUs with relevance to purpose and research objective. These were converted into 22 categories presented in a randomized order without following any particular criterion or strategy to avoid any bias as suggested by Friman, Nyberg, and Norlander, (2004). A shortened description of each category is here presented, followed by few citations concerned with each

category. The categories are brought together, summarized and discussed in four themes namely: Perceived causes of conflicts, Conflict experiences, Reactions to conflict, and Management of conflict situations.

Frustration (22MUs – 18 for farmers, 4 for herdsmen)

Respondents, particularly farmers, expressed increasing frustration as a result of 'constant' destruction of their farms by 'Fulani men'.

Example: -- 'It is really devastating year in year out...'/-- 'How can I be farming for cattlemen?'/-- 'Do they want to stop us from farming?'/-- 'I am left with nothing from my farm this year. How do I fend for my family? Should I go and steal?'/-- 'Last year they (cattle herdsmen) nearly killed two of my sons after destroying my farms. What did we do for them?'/ A herdsman with a very large herd of cattle exclaimed '..... We are overwhelmed by scarcity of fodder for our cattle'. Another young herdsman said: 'We now undergo greater stress before getting grass and water for our animals. It is now very rigorous...'/ -- 'The job of cattle herding has become more demanding and stressful..... It is frustrating as well...'

Accusations and Counter-accusations (18MUs – 15 for farmers, 3 for herdsmen)

Mutual accusations and counter-accusations were prevalent among both groups. Farmers blamed herdsmen for farm destruction by cattle, while herdsmen blame farmers for farming on lands that were hitherto not cultivated, and probably not meant for farming.

Example: '...These herdsmen are wicked, evil people...'/-- 'The Fulani are ungodly by deliberately taking their cattle to my two farms every year'/-- 'The herdsmen are not farming within their stock routes'/-- 'They lie by saying our farms are on their stock routes,... you saw my farm yesterday, is it along their stock routes?'/-- 'Even if they encounter farms along their routes, does it make any sense for them to destroy farms that took a lot of money and sweat to establish. Also, among herdsmen: '...how should farmers

deny my cattle of pasture'? /--'We are not destroying their farms. They decided to plant on our grazing routes, how do they expect us to feed our animals?'/ 'Farmers accuse us wrongly because we are always their targets. They never met us on their farms...'

Job Interest (19 MUs- 15 for farmers, 4 for herdsmen)

This theme concerns the depth of respondents' interest in their respective occupations as this is crucial to the sustenance of their livelihoods. Both groups generally expressed great interest in their occupations even in the face of the problem caused by farmer-herdsmen conflict as well as other difficulties they encounter day-to-day in their respective occupations.

Example:-- 'farming is a job I cannot leave for any other.'/-- 'I am sure that my children would continue from where I shall stop.'/-- 'Other comments from farmers included: 'The farmer is king...'/-- 'No farming, no food.'/-- 'I enjoy farm work a lot....'/--'I hope to increase my farm size'/-- 'I farm all year round... and am happy to do so.'-- / 'If I get more money today, I shall start mechanized farming.'/-- 'Farming is the most honourable work... I am proud to be farmer.' A herdsman said, '.....If I don't herd cattle, what would I herd, rabbits?'/-- 'I enjoy cattle herding.... I cannot do any other work.'/-- '.....It is very interesting...'/

Farmer Poverty (21 MUs)

Conflict might be increasing poverty among arable crop farmers.

Example: A young farmer said '..... I am poorer now, due to the excesses of these *Bororos*/' 'Now, I cannot pay my children's school fees'/ '.... Even no food for my family to eat...'/ 'We are now left with nothing'/--'I don't know how my family and I would survive this problem, as we are already impoverished'/-- 'Every year sees us lamenting and loosing everything we have'/-- 'I have been turned into a beggar while not being lazy or disabled,.....after working so hard and spending so much money'/-- 'Farming makes one poor

here because of the acts of these herdsmen.’/-- ‘I am seriously indebted, I have no means of paying back as a result of destruction of all my farms by cattle herdsmen’

Stressful Conditions (13MUs – 11 for farmers, 2 for herdsmen)

Conflict actually produced or aggravated stress among the respondents.

Example: ‘... I was unable to sleep for three nights after my cassava farm was devastated by the Fulani’, said a middle-aged farmer who had a large family. Others: ‘... I lost my temper...’/-- ‘I cannot understand myself again’, said a widowed, young farmer. ‘I don’t think I will be able to recover from the effects of this calamity. My three farms were destroyed simultaneously in two days.I nearly became insane.’/-- ‘I felt greatly annoyed and was ready to do anything.....’/-- ‘I lost weight and everybody knew something was wrong with me’/-- ‘Even my children at home knew I was having problem when my farms were destroyed.....I was disturbed for a very long period.’/-- ‘increasing problem with farmers has introduced a lot of stress into the work of cattle herding.....the situation is very bad.....we are indeed unhappy, too.’/--

Lack of Attention (21MUs – 17 for farmers, 4 for Herdsmen)

Bordering on despondency, respondents expressed a great deal of regret for getting no attention from ‘anybody’ hopelessness

Example: ‘... They have forgotten us...’/-- ‘A cow that has no tail relies on God to ward off houseflies’/-- ‘Our complaints have not been answered by the leaders...we don’t know what we did to them to warrant this kind of neglect, and they were always telling us to farm.’/-- ‘The government must pay attention to this problem’/-- ‘how can we produce more food when we are not respected?they look down on us as if we are not created by God.’ /-- ‘... no one to speak for us...’/-- ‘they only remember us at election periods.’/--

Similar statements among herdsmen include: ‘we have never been assisted by anybody...’/-- ‘no one cares about the

cattle herdsmen.’/--‘nothing has been provided for us. /--‘we have our own problems too.....

Information Gap (19 MUs – 17 for farmers, 2 for herdsman)

The lack of awareness about stock routes\grazing reserves among both parties is a potential source of conflict. Example: ‘.... Are there really designated stock routes for herders?’ Other comments that show information gap were: ‘...we don’t know the stock routes’/ ‘let the government tell us the stock routes and we shall abide’/ ‘How could we know the stock routes,.....nobody told us of them.’/ ‘There are no stock routes here... we do not know of them’/ ‘My farm is very far away....it is a big farm devoted to maize and cassava..... It was thrice devastated by cattle, I don’t know whether it is on the stock routes or not’/ ‘... cattle should not be herded into farms, stock routes or no stock routes...’/ ‘No one knows of them here.’/ A herdsman also said that ‘My brothers that new the stock routes very well are not around anymore’.

Government (24 MUs – 20 for farmers, 4 for herdsman)

Respondents, especially farmers expect a lot from government. Example: ‘.... Government should help us.’/ ‘The herdsman should be given separate grazing zones that would be far away from farming communities.’/ ‘Government should take this issue seriously by having a special agency to oversee the problem of farmers and herdsman.’/ ‘government should support them to have ranches where they would raise their cattle.’/ ‘There should be more effort to make both farmers and herdsman know the (stock) routes ... especially we the farmers. We are ready to obey the routes...’/. ‘Among the herdsman: ‘.....Government should encourage *us too*...’/ ‘Government should enforce stock routes regulations, and create new stock routes...’/ ‘We need to be helped by government to reduce the problem we encounter in our work....’

Depleting Soil Fertility (16 MUs- farmers)

Farmers complained about declining soil fertility, which necessitated them to look for virgin lands to enhance productivity. Example: 'Our lands are no longer fertile.'/ 'I had to abandon my farm for another place due to declining soil fertility.'/ 'Our soils are no longer fertile.'/ 'We just have to look for new lands.'/ 'It is not possible for us to remain on one spot for ever We need to exploit new lands because of declining soil fertility.'/ 'In my own case, I have been using this land for farming for many years...' / 'I had since noticed that the land is not giving me desirable results.'/ 'I had no choice than to look for fresh land.'/ 'The only thing we have to do is to exploit virgin lands if we have to remain as farmers.'

New Stock Routes (13 MUs- 9 for farmers and 4 for herdsmen)

Stock routes are important determinants in farmer-herdsmen conflict. Both groups expressed the necessity for new sock routes. Example among herdsmen: 'We have been using the same routes for up to fifteen years.'/ 'It is good to have new stock routes if they are easy to ply for us and our cattle.'/ 'Our problem with farmers would be solved if the stock routes are re-defined.'/ 'It will be good to revisit the issue of stock routes, because it is the cause of the problem.' Among the farmers, examples are: 'If it is possible to give them another stock route, so that they will stop destroying our farms, we welcome it.'/ 'They should be given a separate route that they would use for their cattle.'/ 'Giving herdsmen another stock route is a good idea, but would they comply...?'/ 'A solution to this problem is that the government should design a new stock route for these herdsmen, so that they would stop disturbing us.'/ 'We have been calling for new stock routes for the herdsmen for a long time.'

Fertilizer (19 MUs)

The scarcity of farm inputs, especially fertilizer, is a problem farmers complained about. It is closely tied to the issue of soil fertility. Farmers expressed the view that availability of fertilizer could reduce the necessity for shifting cultivation that they mostly embark on in order to solve the problem of soil infertility. Examples of their statements: 'There is very short supply of fertilizer for our crops.'/ 'I always find it difficult to get fertilizer to use in my farm.'/ 'To get fertilizer is a serious problem for us.'/ 'If there is adequate and timely supply of fertilizer, our problems would be minimized.'/ 'I was unable to get even a single bag of fertilizer this year and I therefore devoted the most part of my farm to cassava.' / 'Farming nowadays require the use of fertilizer ... one will just be wasting his time. We have problem getting adequate fertilizer.'

Transportation (21 MUs –17 farmers, 4 for herdsmen)

Another major issue raised during the interviews was the problem relating to transhumance and movement of farm inputs and output. They believed that poor transportation facilities contribute to the problem of farmer-herdsmen conflict. The following are the examples of their statements that point to this fact: 'We could farm elsewhere and move away from where our farms are being destroyed, but the roads are very bad.'/ 'There are no vehicles to convey us to other places we could use as farms.'/ 'We encounter great difficulty transporting ourselves and farm output.' / 'If the roads are good, we can farm far away from the reach of the cattle herdsmen'/ 'Better roads could reduce the tension between farmers and herdsmen.'/ 'Bad roads are discouraging us a lot.' Among herdsmen, there was unanimous call for good roads as well. Example: 'Good roads would enable us to move away and prevent frequent clashes with the farmers.'/ 'We also benefit when the roads are good.'

Increasing Enterprise Size (14 MUs – 11 farmers and 3 herdsmen)

Increasing the scale of production among both farmers and herdsmen has continued to be a great challenge. The two groups indicated that the need to increase output has contributed to the level and rate of conflict between them. Example among farmers: 'I try to increase the size of my farm yearly.'/ 'No one wishes to remain on one spot. I try to make farm bigger every year.'/ 'A big farm is the pride of the farmer. Why should I be happy or satisfied with a small farm?' 'Successful farming requires a large piece of land...not necessarily on a single location. One should have a farm that can make life meaningful, unless he has another source of income.' Among the herdsmen: 'When you breed animals, definitely it would lead to increase in herd size.'/ 'There are cattle herdsmen coming from other parts of the country, and even from outside the country.'

Water (4 MUs, all herdsmen)

Drinking water for cattle is a major concern for herdsmen, especially during dry season. The search for water could thus be cumbersome. It may also affect farmer-herdsmen competition for resource use. Example: 'We face a lot of difficulty when we search for water for our animals.'/ 'This is because farmers use water bodies (river banks) for vegetable production... this is where the problem lies.'/ 'Our animals need to drink water, especially during hot weather.'/ 'It is true that we sometimes pass through farms to get to rivers and water sources.'

Fighting Back (11 MUs – 8 for farmers, 3 for herdsmen)

A number of respondents on both sides stated that they actually retaliated what was done to them as a way of defending themselves and property. Example among farmers: 'We made them (herdsmen) realize that what they did was wrong by fighting them ...'/ '...We seized their cattle to avenge the destruction of our crops.'/ 'The other time.... they

beat our people after destroying our farms ... we fought back ...'/ 'We want peaceful coexistence with them, but we are ready to defend ourselves ...'/ 'How can someone destroy your farm and start fighting you ... and you would not defend yourself ...' Among herdsmen, the examples are: 'They wrongly accuse us of destroying their farms when actually they did not meet us on their farms ... fighting could start ... we fight back ...' / 'We all know that peace is important ... we hate fighting, but you cannot steal our cattle and expect us to smile at you. Nobody would like that...' / 'We fight only when we are provoked. We don't initiate fighting.'

Compensation (16 MUs -12 for farmers, 4 for herdsmen)

Compensation as a factor in farmer-herdsmen conflict was also mentioned by respondents from both sides during the phenomenological interviews. Example among farmers: 'They sometimes agree to pay back for what their cattle had eaten.' / 'I got compensated once in a while ...'/ 'Getting the Fulani herdsmen to pay for the damage they are causing us is very difficult ...' / 'Some people were lucky to get compensation ... I have not been so lucky. No one has ever paid me a single Kobo.'/ 'If they are made to pay compensation ... they would be wary of destroying people's farms.' 'Even if they compensate us, is it enough?' Among herdsmen: 'I paid compensations to farmers many times.' / 'If they ask for compensation, we normally give them.'/ '.... We paid them compensations.....' / 'I am tired of paying compensations ... but it helps to prevent violence when we settle amicably.'

Guarding Farm (18 MUs for farmers)

Farmers became more security-conscious in the face of their conflict with herdsmen, by guarding their farm physically. Example: 'We started guarding our farms from morning till about 7.00 PM. It made a great impact, but it denied us the time for other important activities'. / 'My children guarded the farms to prevent the Fulani herdsmen from destroying our farm... yet the farms were attacked one way or the other.'/ 'We now made sure we spend more time

in the farm than before so that our farms would be safe from Fulani herdsmen.’/ ‘Once they know you are in the farm, they would not venture into it ... but the moment you are out of the farm, they are certain to come there.’/ ‘... they sometimes come in the evening time ... their actions are deliberate.’/ ‘I stay a little longer in the farm, while I ask my family to go home and make food.’/ ‘I come to the farm everyday and live very late in the evening just to prevent cattle from grazing on my crops.’/ ‘I cannot afford to lose my ‘sweat’ to cattle herdsmen; we stay longer in the farms.’ / ‘I use other means to guard my farm ... you cannot understand ... it works well.’

Litigation (12 MUs – 8 for farmers, 4 for herdsmen)

Farmer-herdsmen conflict could also lead to court actions. Example from farmers: “I reported..... but nothing came out of it.’ / ‘I took the incident to the police and it was settled in court.’/ ‘I don’t like court cases, but last year when the whole of my farm was destroyed by cattle, and with strong evidence I took the matter to the court and won.’/ ‘It is normal to seek redress in court when you have been wronged.’ / ‘they always deny ... even when they are caught red-handed ... with ample evidence ... they loose in the court.’ ‘Going to court is not a complete solution, but it could be necessary to do so especially when you have nothing to fall back to and you have concrete evidence ... I think it is alright.’

Among herdsmen: ‘I have been taken to court by farmers twice, I lost in both cases ...’/ ‘Taking us to the police or court cannot solve the problem ... We can solve the problems without going to the police.’/ ‘It (going to police/court) is a waste of time and money. When we are guilty, we accept...’ / ‘I try as much as possible to avoid court cases with farmers ... I don’t like it.’

Associations/ Unions (10 MUs, 8 for farmers, 2 for herdsmen)

The role of associations/unions among both groups was also highlighted during the interviews, as references

were made to them by respondents from both groups. Examples among farmers: 'We often discuss this matter at union meetings, but ...' / 'Our unions are doing their best to solve this problem.' / 'We have appealed to the government through our association.' / '...even last week, our union members attended a meeting with Ministry of Agriculture officials on this issue.' / 'I reported the issue to our union leaders ... their own farms were also destroyed before.' 'There was a time we held meeting with their (association) leaders on how to avoid violent conflicts.' Among herdsmen: 'Our associations have met with them severally ... it made some impact.' / 'I also believe that at the level of associations a lot of progress could be achieved ... we should come together and solve the problems ... conflicts pay no one.'

Local Authorities/ (13 MUs - 10 for farmers, 3 for herdsmen)

Local authorities' roles were also mentioned by a number of respondents from both sides during the interviews. Examples of related statements by farmers include: 'The traditional ruler here is as concerned about the problem as any one of us. He called us many times to be calm ... to avoid any fight.' / 'Our local leader is active in this matter. If the leaders are more involved in coordinated way, it will be helpful.' / 'We cannot overlook the role of the traditional ruler in this situation. I think they are important.' / 'they are powerless ... all they do is to appeal to us not to fight.' / 'He is only asking us to pursue peace and other pieces of advice.' / 'Please tell me what can the traditional ruler do ... he has no control over the Fulani people. His own farm was destroyed many times. It is a serious matter.' Among herdsmen: 'Our leader meets with them regularly to speak on our behalf.' / 'Whenever we have problem, we quickly report to our leader. He normally advises us on what to do.' / 'Our leader always appeals to us to be careful with farms ... to avoid conflict.' / 'We get support from our leaders during crises with farmers.'

Cooperation (11 MUs, 6 for farmers, 5 for herdsmen)

Cooperative effort in farmer-herdsmen conflict was also indicated by farmers as well as herdsmen during the interviews. Among the farmers, the examples are: 'It requires effort on both sides for us to have peace on this matter ... no one can do it alone ... we must come together.'/ 'There must be understanding from both sides ... it is very important.'/ 'We are willing to cooperate with them, if only they would exercise some restraint.'/ 'We are peace-loving, we are ready for anything or programme that would lead to the end of this trouble.'/ 'There is need for mutual understanding and cooperation among farmers and herdsmen ... and even government.'/ 'Fighting every year yields nothing but losses. It is only mutual cooperation and assistance from government that could eliminate these conflicts.' Herdsmen also commented on the issue of cooperation: 'We also want peace. We are certainly ready to cooperate with farmers and anyone on this matter.'/ 'Is there anyone that loves fighting all the time ... it is only by dialogue that things of this nature could be solved.'/ 'I don't like the way things are going on. It is unfortunate, but if we join hands together with the government ... there would be peace sooner or later.'/ 'We need to cooperate and understand ourselves.' 'The only way to solve this problem is for us to understand and appreciate the other side of the story as well...'

The results of this phenomenological study described the perceived causes of farmer-herdsmen conflict among respondents, their experiences and responses to conflict as well as their perspectives on how to effectively manage conflict. The respondents were asked to describe their personal (subjective) experiences and give concrete examples to broaden the understanding of the phenomena under study as well as to ensure credibility. Although the 22 categories highlighted above individually gave some information on the results of the phenomenological interviews, but it is expedient to amalgamate the related categories into themes for discussion. The 22 categories are thus summarized into four themes namely: perceived causes of conflict, conflict experiences, responses to conflict, and managing conflict.

Perceived causes of conflict

This theme concerns the views of the respondents on the specific, immediate and remote causes of farmer-herdsmen conflicts. The categories under the theme are categories 6, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 16. These are inadequate attention, information gap, depleting soil fertility, fertilizer, poor transportation, increasing scale of enterprise, and water respectively. Together and individually, these were the perceived causes of farmer-herdsmen conflict according to the participants in the phenomenological interviews. Information gap with respect to the stock routes was a major factor contributing to farmer-herdsmen conflicts. Depleting soil fertility, inadequate supply of fertilizer, and the need to increase scale of operation by both groups were also found to indirectly precipitate conflict, as farmers confirmed that they sought for virgin lands to farm. By so doing they might move into stock routes inadvertently. Depleting soil nutrient and quality were also reported by Adegboye (2004) and Haggblade, Hazel, Kirsten, and Mkandawire (2005) as being responsible for slow agricultural growth in Nigeria and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. This finding is consistent with those of other researchers such as Gefu and Kolawole (2002), Moore (2005), and Nyong and Fiki (2005) that intensification and extensification of agricultural production due to increasing human population contributed to the rate and level of farmer-herdsmen conflict in Africa south of the Sahara. Adegboye (2004) also noted the effect of depleting soil fertility on farmer-herdsmen conflict and declining food production. The problem posed by poor/inadequate transportation infrastructure by limiting production scale and creating encumbrances in the farm location was also noted in the interview data. Lack of good roads and other peculiar transportation means might have made farmers locate their farms at 'convenient' places without giving due considerations to whether or not they were using herdsmen's stock routes. The issue for drinking water for cattle was another factor. Water for domestic consumption as a crucial problem of rural communities has also been noted by other researchers including Todd (2007). The search for drinking water, according to the herdsmen could be problematic, and

it has often led to fracas with farmers and local residents who abhorred sharing drinking water with cattle. Consistent with the observations of Boege and Turner (2006) and Osinde and Turner (2007) who, in their respective studies, stated the striking correlation between water scarcity and conflict/tensions over access to water, this finding perhaps indicates that water scarcity may be a crucial element in farmer-herdsmen conflict in the study area.

Personal conflict experiences

This theme is concerning the personal lived experiences of participants during and after their mutual conflict for land use. Categories 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7 are under the theme. These are interest, frustration, farmer poverty, stress, and setbacks respectively. This is consistent with the findings of Prowse (2008) that poverty among farmers is real. It is note-worthy that respondents expressed remarkable interest in their respective occupations despite the negative consequences they experienced as a result of their mutual conflict. This perhaps is an indication of their resilience in the face of undesirable and stressful situations. Another peculiar finding relates to the level of frustration occasioned by farmer-herdsmen conflict, and the perceived high level of farmer neglect. This feeling of neglect among farmers, also noted by Bengtsson (2007), is capable of worsening the current low agricultural productivity by psychologically dampening the spirit of farmers to produce. It was, however, amazing to find out that frustration and interest in their respective occupations among respondents went *pari pasu*. This could be due to the observations that agricultural activities have become part of culture in rural Nigeria (Agunbiade and Adedoyin, 1998). Rural people may continue to be involved in agricultural activities, whatever the odds are. Another experience in the interviews was that, particularly among farmers, the conflict brought about setbacks in their occupational and other life activities.

Responses

This theme deals with the responses, not necessarily the coping strategies, of the participants in the

phenomenological data gathering. It actually revealed deeper information on how the respondents reacted to the conflict, not how they coped with the effect of their mutual conflict. The categories that come under this theme are categories 3, 17, 19, and 23; which are accusations/counter-accusations, report to local leaders, fighting back, and guarding farm respectively. It is obvious from the accusations and counter-accusations from both sides that neither of the two was ready to accept blame for the conflict. It shows that there was some level of misunderstanding. While farmers accused herdsmen of destroying their farms, herdsmen claimed that farmers were farming on the stock routes meant for their cattle. Farmers claimed that herdsmen deliberately invade their farms. Some farmers in the interviews claimed they actually met herdsmen cutting down their maize plants for cattle to devour. These accusations were immediate responses that led to conflicts.

Reporting to local authorities was another response among respondents from both sides. This obviously have the tendency to slow down the tempo of the occurrence of a conflict. We may thus label this particular as being conflict-averse. However, some respondents claimed to fight back as their immediate response, especially when they knew which herdsmen attacked their farms. This set of respondents may be referred to as being conflict-prone. To protect their farms and probably forestall reoccurrence of farm destruction by cattle, some farmers adopted the response of guarding their farms by staying longer into the evenings. This obviously has the negative effects of denying them and their children the time for other equally important domestic activities.

Managing conflict

This last theme centers on the perspectives of participants on how to manage farmer-herdsmen conflicts (categories 10, 12, 18, 20, 22, and 24). These were identified as government, new stock routes, compensation, litigation, associations/unions, and cooperation respectively. Most of the participants believed the government must show a more serious commitment to the management (prevention and control) of farmer-herdsmen conflict. They expressed their readiness to cooperate with government in this regard.

Related to the call on government was the need for enforcement of compliance with, and creation of new stock routes. Participants believed that this would go a long way to prevent frequent clashes over land between the two groups. They also expressed the need for more information on the stock routes so that all stakeholders would be aware of them. Another perspective was that offenders should pay compensation, which should be commensurate with the level of damage either to farm or cattle. Farmers, particularly, called for higher compensation for the destruction of their farms.

The use of litigation process by the farmers in seeking redress was also highlighted during the interviews. The interviews revealed that the herdsmen abhorred legal actions, and may thus be prevented from herding their cattle into farms if they are made to realize that they would be taken to court if they contravened stock routes regulations. This finding is consistent with the results of a study by Crook (2007) in Ghana which revealed that the use of litigation in formal courts is not only popular, but has also helped in reducing land disputes.

Another view was the need to involve farmers' and herders' unions/associations in the management of conflict. That unions and associations need to play greater roles is consistent with the observations of Heemskerk, Nederlof, and Wennink (2007), and the findings of Hesse, Ezeomah, Hassan, and Ardo (2001). Lastly, but closely related, was the call, and mutual preparedness for cooperation and reciprocal understanding. Both sides maintained that it is only through dialogue and constructive cooperation that the much desired peace could be achieved.

5. Conclusion and Policy Implications of Findings

This phenomenological study with its sample of thirty farmers and six herdsmen attempted to shed lights and deepen the appreciation of the peculiarities of farmer-herdsmen conflict. Although the participants in this study were randomly selected, the ultimate intention, as in most qualitative research, was not to lay claim to exact representativeness but to provide some very important

insights on the phenomenon to policy makers as well as researchers. For instance, the study finds out that the adequate and timely provision of fertilizers and enhancement of rural transportation would hopefully help in reducing farmer-herdsmen conflict. Same for provision of safe, drinking water as it would reduce the sharing of streams and other water bodies between rural residents and herdsmen's cattle. Findings here also indicated that, despite frustrations, setbacks and conflict-induced poverty, farmers in particular still had remarkable interest in farming. It indicates, perhaps that the easiest and most welcome way of helping the rural poor is to continue to implement policies and programmes that would enhance agricultural development. The study recommends the following as policy implications of findings:

1. A multi-stage conflict management framework is required to curb the danger posed by farmer-herdsmen conflict. The proposed framework should be statutory committees at community, local, state, and federal government levels. It should also include the relevant occupational unions.
2. Traditional and local leaders should be well involved in finding solutions to farmer-herdsmen conflict. The committees proposed above must have representatives of the local leadership.
3. Farmer poverty is not only pervasive; available it is also on the increase, due to many factors that include farmer-herdsmen conflict. A lot of efforts have been put in place with no meaningful success. There is therefore the need for more concerted and deliberate policies and programmes on how to find realistic and practical solutions to farmer poverty.

Acknowledgement

The authors wish to acknowledge the contributions of Mr. Yusuf T. Ilofa, Mumeen Bashar and Miss Esther Dauda during data collection. We also acknowledge the assistance received from Mr. Razaq Bolaji and Mr. Christopher Jiya during data analysis.

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