

IMPACT OF HERDERS-FARMERS CONFLICTS ON INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES AND SCHOOL ENROLMENT IN BENUE STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The study examined herders-farmers conflicts, infrastructural facilities and school enrolment in Benue State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. The survey design method was adopted for the study. The population of the study is eleven thousand nine hundred eighty seven (11,987) teachers from 407 secondary schools in Benue State. A total of 400 teachers from one hundred secondary schools constituted the sample of the study. Purposive and proportionate sampling procedures were used to select the sample size for the study. The instrument for the study is a researcher designed questionnaire tagged ‘‘Herders-Farmers Conflicts, Infrastructural Facilities and School Enrolment Questionnaire’’ (HFCIFSEQ). The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The result shows that there is a serious impact of herders-farmers conflicts on the provision of infrastructural facilities in secondary schools and on students’ enrolment in secondary schools in Benue State. The study recommended among other things that the main responsibility of any government is to protect lives and properties of her citizens. Therefore, the Federal government should rise up to its responsibility by providing enough security in all the affected areas and Federal government of Nigeria, state, local governments, individual and non-governmental organisations should collaborate and embark on reconstruction, building of schools, hospital, homes and other infrastructures damaged in the study areas. This will encourage the people to send their children back to school.

Keywords: Herders-Farmers Conflicts, Infrastructural Facilities and School-enrolment

Introduction

Education is an instrument for development and per excellence that can be used by the nation in development of individuals and the country at large. Its continuous growth and quality improvement depends on a number of factors; some of these factors are the provision of infrastructural facilities, quality of teachers, timely payment of teachers’ salary, provision and constant revision of the curriculum (Ogbonnaya, 2013). The factors mentioned above are paramount and can bring the desired growth where they are pursued and provided. On the other hand, where there is any inhibition and they are not pursued, it stifles growth and slows down the educational process. Apart from the factors mentioned above, there are some other factors that could stifle the process of growth in the education industry, these factors are incidental factors identified by the researcher. Incidental factors in the context of this study include natural disasters (flood, storm), insurgencies, and crises emanating from herders-farmers disagreement, otherwise termed as herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria.

Generally, conflict is the act of coming into collision, clash or being in opposition with one another. It is also the tension that is experienced when a group of people feel that their needs or desires are likely to be denied or where their language and ethnic values set in (Oluwole & Pinga, 2017; Pinga, 2014). Onsarigo (2007) also sees conflict as a condition when one party feels that the other party has frustrated or is about to frustrate certain concerns of that one party. It therefore, implies that conflicts exist whenever an action by one person or a group of persons prevents, obstructs and interferes with the desires of a particular individual or a group of people. Agu (2005) attests to Onsarigo's point of view that conflict manifests when someone has a chance to achieve his or her purpose at the expense of someone else. Conflict according to Robert (2006) is a turning point that distinguishes the outcome of an event unfavourably between life and death, violence or non-violence and resolution or protracted conflicts. Koeb and Eilson (2016) on the other hand stated that conflict is a disjointed process that results in the disruption or destruction of all bonds of unity that might have previously existed between two disputants. Thus, conflicts come whenever two or more groups seek to possess the same item, occupy by the same space or an exclusive position play incompatible role, maintain incompatible goals or undertake mutually incompatible means of achieving certain purpose (Nuhu, 2018).

According to Aliyu (2004) conflicts in Nigeria are of diverse types and have being on rapid increase since after the civil war of 1967-1970. These conflicts are mainly attributable to resource control and divergent value systems in the country. According to Nuhu (2018) in Nigeria, conflict between farmers and herders arise from disagreements over the use of land around farmland and/or grazing areas and stock routes and access to water points for both animals and households. Nuhu (2018) further asserted that, movement of herders from one area of the country to another is usually caused by the increasing demand for fresh grazing grounds especially during draught periods or dry seasons, when the herders move southwards because of the availability of pasture. In most cases, the herders encountered problems with the local people because farmers' crops were destroyed by their cattle (Paul, 2015).

A range of factors underlie these disputes, including porous borders, proliferation of small and light weapons in the rural areas, destruction of crops by cattle, cattle rustling, increased competition for land (driven by desertification, climate change, and population growth), lack of clarity around the demarcation of pasture and stock routes, and the breakdown of traditional relationships and formal agreements between pastoralists and farmers (Paul, 2015). Since 1999 when Nigeria returned to the league of civilized countries under democratic governance, the herders-farmers conflicts have continued to spread and indeed appeared to have heightened insecurity in the country. Fasona and Omojola (2005) contended that conflicts and other forms of unrest have been reported in the Northern Nigeria between 1991 till date, farmers-headers conflicts accounted for 35%. These conflicts have extended to other regions of the country with the North-central becoming the major theatre of war within the last seven years and the casualties of these confrontations is disastrous as no-body cares about the heinous attack on the farmers with impunity by the herder marauders; killing children, pregnant women and unborn babies, the old, raping of wives and daughters and destruction of properties. As stated above, the North Central Region of Nigeria which Benue State is part of, seem to be the hotbed of farmers-herders conflict (Saidu, 2018). More especially Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau states as well as some

North-Eastern states like Taraba and Kaduna appear to have recorded the highest number of incidences of farmers-herders conflict in recent time.

Sequel to the above, it is important to note that the farmers-herdsmen conflict assumed devastating dimension in Benue and other states of Nigeria. It has affected local government areas like Agatu, Guma, Logo, Gwer-west, Gwer-East, Ukum, Buruku, Katsina-Ala, Kwande and Makurdi all in Benue state. Saidu (2018) asserted that in recent attacks which occurred in Guma and Logo local governments many people were killed and properties worth billions of naira were destroyed in one of the latest attacks on the defenseless rural dwellers that started on the 1st January 2018. The violence instantly spread to other towns and villages in the area. In these local governments, the attackers usually invade the settlements, kill, search the people, destroy both public and private properties and farm lands and by extension breach the security of the state. In most of these communities, they occupy the areas after chasing away the original dwellers. Aside killing and destruction of properties, their activities also affect the management of primary schools as they often settle in these schools and destroy the facilities.

Management of secondary schools which requires proper planning, directing, monitoring and controlling of human, material, time and physical resources, finances, records and information flow has been affected drastically within this latter part of the 21st century as most school facilities and documents have been destroyed thereby keeping students and teachers out of school (Ahmed, 2015). The incessant destruction of lives and properties has created management problems for school teachers and head-teachers in such areas. According to Suleiman (2016), when farmer-herders disaster strikes, infrastructural facilities in the schools such as classroom buildings, offices, books and other relevant documents are greatly destroyed or damaged. Most often, schools are burn down to ashes in the rural areas. This makes it hard for learners to continue with their learning activities for a long time as they relocate to a safer place with their families. The carnage also brought about decreased school enrolment in some parts of the state that are affected by the crises. The emotional and psychological problems created in the people as a result of the fear further lead to decreased enrolment (Joseph, 2017).

The author further notes that even parents who have returned from the internally displaced persons camps prefer to stay at home with their children, than sending them back to school to continue their education. According to most parent interviewed by the researchers, they prefer to stay at home with their children because they do not know when next the Fulani herders are coming to attack. This psychological problem further aggravated the enrolment situation in the affected areas in Benue State. Apart from the fear of the unknown, the financial crisis the returners from IDP camps may have little or no money at all to send their children/wards back to school. On the whole school enrolment reduced by half even when normalcy returned to some areas because many people left the rural areas and even the state in search of peace and safer schools for their children. Thus, Benue state which had a high school enrolment rate is now lagging behind in this area as most school age children are found in Internally Displaced Persons Camps. Ahmed (2015) notes that when there is natural disaster or herders-farmers clash in an area, it affects school enrolment because many people run from their places of abode to safer places. When there is insurgencies for instance, Boko Haram in Nigeria or the Fulani Herdsmen

crises, many people will flee the area for safety, this affects the population of the area generally, school enrolment and the quality of educational improvement.

In addition, the researchers observe that there has been a steady decline in school enrolment for over two decades in most rural areas across the state. This decline in school enrolment is further worsened by some of the incidental factors mentioned above. In Benue state of Nigeria, for over three years now, the researchers observed that there has been a steady decline in school enrolment which seems to be as a result of crises between the Fulani cattle herdsman and the indigenes of the area, some of the major towns and commercial cities in the affected local government areas were attacked and people fled for their lives. This crisis has affected school enrolment, the quality of teaching and educational quality improvement advocated for all in this millennium. The Federal government of Nigeria and authorities of Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, Kaduna and Taraba states Government have made attempt to ensure that peace returns to the areas and that the internally displaced persons return from camps to their homes, but this seems not to have yielded meaningful results as most people are yet to return. From the forgoing, one would understand that, these conflicts between farmers-herders have not only affected the infrastructural facilities and school enrolment but the entire educational system in the state and other parts of the country. It is in view of the above background that the researchers deemed it necessary to assess the extent to which herders-farmers conflicts affects infrastructural facilities and school enrolment in Benue State.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the efforts of government, parents, non-governmental organizations and the administrators of secondary schools in Benue state of Nigeria to ensure a conducive teaching and learning environment that will enhance students' academic performance, the problems associated with herders-farmers conflicts seem to hamper and overwhelm these efforts. This may be due to the series of attacks on the rural dwellers in the study area by suspected herders which have led to killings and destruction of properties worth billions of naira. Most often, school facilities such as classrooms, office buildings, educational technology materials, and relevant documents were destroyed, lives and school were hampered. This may influence the secondary schools in terms of school facilities and enrolment as thousands of these students who may have moved with their families to places of safety may have had their schooling programme disturbed. The problem of the current study was to assess the extent to which herders-farmers conflicts affect infrastructural facilities and school enrolment in Benue State of Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the extent to which herders-farmers conflicts affect infrastructural facilities and school enrolment in Benue State of Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. Determine the extent to which herders-farmers conflicts affect the provision of infrastructural facilities in secondary schools in Benue State of Nigeria.
- ii. Find out the extent to which herders-farmers conflicts affect school enrolment in secondary schools in Benue State of Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. To what extent do herders-farmers conflicts affect the provision of infrastructural facilities in secondary schools in Benue State of Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent do herders-farmers conflicts affect school enrolment in secondary schools in Benue State of Nigeria?

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design. The study was carried out in Benue State of Nigeria. The population comprised of 11,987 teachers from 407 secondary schools in Benue State during the 2017/2018 academic session (Benue State Ministry of Education, Science & Technology, 2020). A sample of 400 teachers from one hundred secondary schools was selected using purposive and proportionate sampling techniques. This sample size is considered adequate since it is in line with Achor and Ejigbo's (2006) assertion that for a larger population, a sample of 10% of the population is adequate. Achor and Ejigbo, further stressed that the percentage could be higher or less depending on the population of the study. A researcher designed questionnaire tagged "Farmers-Herders Conflicts, Infrastructural Facilities and School Enrolment Questionnaire (HFCIFSEQ)" was used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into Sections A and B. Section A contained information on the personal data of the respondents, while Section B contained information that bordered on how herders-farmers conflicts affect infrastructural facilities and school enrolment in secondary schools in Benue State. The responses of teachers were collated and analyzed for results. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question. The decision was based on the real limit of numbers. Hence, a modified Likert scale was considered for this study i.e. Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE).

The face validity was employed in this study. However, the instrument was validated by five (5) experts from the Department of Guidance and Counselling University of Abuja, their recommendations and suggestions was considered before the final draft of the instrument, their contributions on the instrument confirmed the face validity of instrument. The reliability of the instrument was established using test re-test method. The instrument was sampled on thirty (30) teachers from private secondary schools in Benue State twice within two (2) weeks interval, after which the two (2) set of scores were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. This gave a reliability index of 0.72 which was seen high enough to confirm the reliability level and was good for the study. However, in administering the instrument, the researchers used this year 2018/2019 annual secondary schools census conducted by Department for International Development (DFID) in partnership with BSUBEB. Thus, the researchers and other ten (10) research assistants assisted in the administration of the copies of questionnaire. The research assistants were trained on the necessary guidelines that will facilitate the smooth administration of the questionnaire to respective respondents.

Results

The data were analysed and interpreted in line with the research questions and as follow:

Research Question One: To what extent do herders-farmers conflicts affect the provision of infrastructural facilities in secondary schools in Benue State of Nigeria?

Table 1: Showing Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of the Impact of Farmers-Herders Conflicts on the Provision of Infrastructural Facilities in Secondary Schools in Benue State.

S/N	Items	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Farmers-herders conflicts lead to the burning down of classroom in secondary schools in my area.	99	152	79	70	2.70	1.03	High Extent
2	Conflicts between farmers-herders have led to the destruction of staff offices.	89	179	99	33	2.81	0.88	High Extent
3	Farmers-herders conflicts have led to the destruction of classroom desks.	141	186	35	38	3.08	0.90	High Extent
4	Farmers-herders conflicts have caused damage to the school records in secondary schools.	111	177	76	36	2.91	0.91	High Extent
5	Farmers-herders conflicts lead to the damaging of teaching aids.	138	148	35	79	2.86	1.18	High Extent
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation						2.87	0.98	High Extent

Table 1 shows that the teachers rating of items from 1-5 were 2.70, 2.81, 3.08, 2.91 and 2.86 respectively with corresponding standard deviations of 1.03, 0.88, 0.90, 0.91, and 1.18. Based on the cut-off point of 2.50, the teachers rated all the items to a high extent indicating that farmers-herders conflicts lead to the burning down of classrooms in secondary schools in their respective areas. That conflict between farmers-herders has led to the destruction of staff offices in secondary schools. The respondents also agreed to a high extent that farmers-herders conflicts have led to the destruction of classroom desks. They also agreed that farmers-herders conflicts have caused damage to the school records in secondary schools. More so, that farmers-herders conflicts lead to the damaging of instructional materials. The cluster mean of 2.87 and standard deviation of 0.98 were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that farmers-herders conflicts affect the provision of infrastructural facilities in secondary schools in Benue State of Nigeria to a high extent.

Research Question Two: To what extent do farmers-herders conflicts affect school enrolment in secondary schools in Benue State?

Table 2: Showing the Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of the Impact of Farmers-Herders Conflicts on School Enrolment in Secondary Schools in Benue State.

S/N	Items	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
6	Farmers-herders conflicts have made parents to move their wards from the rural secondary	123	166	47	64	2.87	1.03	High Extent

	schools to town where there are more security agents.							
7	Farmers-herders conflicts have led to the death of many school age children thereby reducing students' population in schools.	90	154	100	56	2.70	0.97	High Extent
8	Farmers-herders conflicts have killed parents of school age children thereby leaving no one to enroll such children in school.	63	200	112	25	2.75	0.79	High Extent
9	Farmers-herders conflicts have disabled many school age children thereby making it difficult for their parents to enroll them in school.	164	166	36	34	3.15	0.91	High Extent
10	Farmers-herders conflicts scare many parents from enrolling their children in the school for the fear of been killed by the herders.	120	190	41	49	2.95	0.95	High Extent
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation					2.88	0.93	High Extent

Table 2 shows that the teachers rating of items, 6-10 were 2.87, 2.70, 2.75, 3.15 and 2.95 respectively with corresponding standard deviations of 1.03, 0.97, 0.79, 0.91 and 0.95. Based on the data analysed, the respondents agreed that farmers-herders conflicts have made parents to move their wards from the rural secondary schools to urban secondary schools where there are more security agents. They also agreed to a high extent that farmers-herders conflicts have led to the death of many school age children thereby reducing pupils population in schools and that farmer-herders conflicts have killed parents of school age children thereby leaving no one to enroll such children in school. The table also shows that farmers-herders conflicts have disabled many school age children thereby making it difficult for their parents to enroll them in schools to a high extent. Moreover, the respondents indicated to a high extent that farmers-herders conflicts scare many parents from enrolling their children in the school for the fear of been killed by the herders. The cluster mean of 2.88 with standard deviation of 0.93 were rated above the decision mean of 2.50. This implies that farmers-herders conflicts affect school enrolment in secondary schools to a high extent.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of this study revealed that farmers-herders conflicts have significant effects on the provision of infrastructural facilities in secondary schools in Benue State of Nigeria to a high extent. During the research period, the researchers observed that educational facilities at the secondary school levels were burnt down to ashes in the study areas. This makes it hard for

learners to continue with their learning activities for a long time as they relocate to a safer place with their families. This is so, because the target of the attackers is to destroy whatever they find on ground including lives and properties. The findings of this research study corroborated with that of Suleiman (2016), who found out that whenever farmers-herders disaster strikes, infrastructural facilities in the schools such as classroom buildings, offices, books and other relevant documents are greatly damaged or destroyed.

The second finding of the study shows that farmers-herders conflicts have significant effects on school enrolment in secondary schools in Benue state to a high extent. This result was possible as people would not want to stay just for the sake of their wards education and get killed by the invaders. As a result everybody takes to their heels for safety and this movement affects the enrolment of their children in schools. This finding agrees with that of Ahmed (2015) and Saidu (2018) who noted that when there is farmers-pastoralists clash in an area, it affects school-enrolment because many people run from their places of abode to safer places and this affects the population of the area generally, school enrolment and the quality of educational improvement.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was established that farmers-herders conflicts have significant negative effect on the management of secondary schools in Benue State in the areas of infrastructural facilities and students' enrolment to a high extent. These conflicts undermine educational development and economic growth by destroying productive system of the society. The worst part is that many students in this part of the country may have failed to be enrolled in school during this disastrous calamity. These conflicts between farmers-herders often force school children to relocate with their families to places that are safe from the conflict areas and this may affect their education as these new places may not have educational facilities to accommodate them.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made for this study:

1. The Federal government should rise up to its primary responsibility by providing enough security in all the affected areas, specifically those flashpoints of the violence and this should be done without prejudice.
2. Both Federal government of Nigeria, state government, local government areas, individual and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should collaborate and embark on reconstruction, building of schools, hospital, homes and other infrastructures damaged in the study areas. This will encourage the people to send their children back to school.
3. Benue and Taraba states have already suggested a workable template as solution to farmers-herders clash by enacting the open grazing, prohibition and ranches establishment law. The Federal government of Nigeria should as a matter of urgency, use all security apparatus to ensure full and immediate implementation of this law and as well adopt it as the solution to end farmers-herders clash which is the cause of incessant killing and destruction of lives and properties in the country.
4. Finally, there is the need to empower the internally displaced persons through means as asset ownership and access to credit facilities. Empowering, them will make them to be

productive and create wealth through the multiplier effect. The gains from their businesses can be used to enrol and support their children in schools.

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