THE IMPACT OF HERDSMEN CRISIS AND FOOD SECURITY IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the herdsmen crisis and food security in Benue State. The specific objectives included assessing the impact of insecurity on food availability in Benue State, examining the effects of farmer displacement on food production in Benue State, and evaluating the extent to which disability and the death of farmers affect access to food in Benue State. This study applied a qualitative methodology. The study employed a variety of sources to gather secondary data, which helped to examine the causes and impact of the crisis. The findings revealed the positive association between the availability of food and insecurity, the stability of food supply and displacement of people, as well as the availability of food and disability and death in Benue State. Recommendations are as follows: strong political will from governments at all levels is fundamental to resolving the herdsmen crisis in Benue State and across the country; there should be an establishment and operation of contemporary grazing reserves in the affected states; and the government should set up crisis mediation, resolution, reconciliation and peace-building mechanisms in rural communities, local government areas and states affected by the crisis.

Keywords: herdsmen, food production, food availability, food accessibility, food security

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Mr. Obi Emmanuel Chinaza

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my “Chi”; to all farmers in Benue State who experience the crisis; to my mother, Mrs. Obi Patience Ogechukwu; to Dr. Okafor Emmanuel Nweke for his support throughout the duration of my study at Siam University, Bangkok, Thailand; to my sister, Okafor Chinwe; to my dearest friend, Miss Orapun Kanjanalekha; and to all those who assisted me in one way or the other in the realization of my dream.

DECLARATION

I, Obi Emmanuel Chinaza, hereby declare that this study is my own original work, except where specific acknowledgements are made. I carried out this Independent Study under the supervision of my advisor.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

i IDPs: Internally Displaced People

They are people forced to flee their homes or places of habitual residence but who remain within their own country's borders.

Ii FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

A specialized agency of the United Nations (UN**)** that leads international efforts to defeat hunger, eliminate food insecurity, and improve agricultural practices worldwide.

Ii ICG: International Crisis Group

An independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization committed to preventing and resolving deadly global conflicts through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy.

iii ACAPS: Assessment Capacity Projects

It is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental initiative that provides free international humanitarian data, analysis, and insights

iv NBS: National Bureau of Statistics

The official national apex statistical agency of Nigeria responsible for developing, coordinating, and publishing official government data on the economy, population, and social conditions.

v UNDP: United Nations Development Program

The United Nations' global development network that advocates for change and connects countries to knowledge, experience, and resources to help people build a better life, focused heavily on eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

One of the greatest challenges that faces the issue of world peace in today's time in all aspects is the emergence of crises. Conflicts have been the norm from America to Europe and from Asia to Africa. Conflict has always been a recurring phenomenon throughout the history of man. This has been largely due to the competition for limited resources among human beings (Ikezue & Ezeah, 2017).

There has been and is ongoing a conflict of very high proportions between some ethnic and religious groups in different states. This is due to the fact that the land has always been a major source of problems for the various users and individuals at varying levels. Such conflicts are of different dimensions, processes and people involved. It has led to extremely dangerous impacts on food security. Therefore, there has been and is ongoing a very dangerous problem of herdsmen in different regions of Nigeria, including Benue State. This is because most of the communities, especially those in Benue State, depend on farming. However, almost all the states in the Middle Belt Zone have faced such a situation of attacks or other forms of attacks causing low food production in Benue State. According to (Adams et al., 2017), the conflicts in Agatu, Benue State have led to the displacement of individuals from where they used to reside, making them abandon their farming activities. In the same breath, Nasarawa, Plateau, Kogi, and Niger States are currently suffering from the problem of the herdsmen crisis. Conflicts in all these areas indicate that economic activities like producing food are at risk of insecurity, which may eventually lead to famine in Nigeria generally. This type of crisis is common in almost all parts of the country. In contemporary times, the crises involving herdsmen have assumed an extra dimension because of the rising

number of fatalities. This particular crisis is one that has been a source of danger and threat to the livelihoods of farmers and herdsmen. The herdsmen crisis has been a source of great threats of insecurity and food crises in the country, especially because most of this crisis occurs in the rural parts of the nation. The crisis of herdsmen in Nigeria has remained for a long time and poses a threat to the food security of the nation.

The consequences of the crisis have created insecurity, displacement, disabilities, and deaths, low production of food, hunger, and malnutrition in the North-Central geo-political zone of Nigeria, particularly in Benue State. This forms the rationale behind researching the herdsmen crisis in Benue State. In situations where the locals are forced to abandon their native land, they become Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Certainly, without them, the local government would have no agricultural produce to supply, which could result in famine.

Empirically, this study is of utmost importance to the government, law enforcement agencies, economic policymakers, and the nation at large. The study goes a long way in providing them with in-depth knowledge with respect to the herdsmen crisis and food security in Nigeria. The study, among others, provides a possible solution to control the herdsmen crisis in Nigeria generally and in Benue State. Theoretically, the study serves as a reference source to academia and researchers, especially those in the category of the herdsmen crisis and food security in Nigeria. The study provides useful evidence on how insecurity affects farmers' access to farmland, agricultural activities, food production, livelihoods, and the availability and affordability of food. It also assists the government in identifying the major factors contributing to the persistence and escalation of the crisis.

1.2 THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The herdsmen issue has become more prevalent recently in Nigeria, particularly in the North-Central region of the country. The reasons for the crisis have been identified to include policy deficiencies, underdevelopment of grazing lands, land ownership and management, population increase, climatic changes, induced competition for environmental resources, among others. This is because of the crisis, which has led to people being displaced from their homes and becoming internally displaced persons, losing lives and property, suffering from hunger and insecurity, destruction of farmland, rustling of cattle, and killing of cattle. The Nigerian government has, however, tried to tackle the issue through several measures on various fronts. Nevertheless, the approach taken by the government to combat this violence has mainly involved the deployment of armed forces and the intervention of eminent individuals during a crisis period. Both armed forces and mediation councils have not been able to solve the crisis. In most situations where armed forces are sent out to curb any form of violence, it exacerbates the situation, particularly with the manner in which the civilian population is treated (Hoffman, 2014). All strategies and diplomatic solutions applied to end this crisis seem to have availed nothing, such as calling for a peace deal with the herdsmen to address the grievances that led to the crisis, and even going so far as to give them finance to keep them calm and away from the crisis.

1.3 QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

This independent study answers the following questions.

1.3.1 To what extent has the herdsmen crisis affected the availability of food in Benue State?

1.3.2 To what extent has the displacement of farmers affected the production of food in Benue State?

1.3.3 How have disability and death of farmers affected the accessibility of food in Benue State?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This independent study has the following objectives

1.4.1 To assess the impact of the herdsmen crisis on the availability of food in Benue State.

1.4.2 To examine the effects of displacement of farmers on food production in Benue State.

1.4.3 To evaluate the extent to which disability and death of farmers affect accessibility to food in Benue State.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this investigation is concentrated on assessing the impact of the herdsmen crisis and food security within the Federal Republic of Nigeria, specifically Benue State.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitation of this research lies in its scope, covering only the herdsmen crisis and food security in Benue State. This research used mostly secondary sources for data collection. These secondary sources comprised peer-reviewed journal articles, credible newspapers and magazines, scholarly textbooks, academic monographs, and verified online academic government documents. The study did not involve primary data collection through interviews, surveys, or field observations.

1.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The research concentrates on the factors that cause the herdsmen crisis and food insecurity in Benue State, Nigeria: land scarcity, climate change, migration, and weak governance, as well as the process to address insecurity, unrest, violence, and conflicts in Benue State through the interventions of government policies, security operations, and conflict resolution mechanisms to establish long-term peace in Benue State, as shown in table 1,

Table 1 Conceptual Framework

Input	Process	Output
1. Land Scarcity caused by a combination of environmental demographic, a human factor 2. Climate change: drought, desertification, and changing rainfall patterns reducing usable land, especially for grazing. 3. Migration of herdsmen to different localities in search of grazing fields because of an increase in population and land scarcity.	1. Process to implement anti-open grazing laws 2. Process to establish government policy responses; ranching initiatives 3. Process to address security challenges and societal unrest through involvement of security agency interventions; police and military operations	Establishing long-term peace in Benue State with the collective efforts of the community leaders in collaboration with government security operatives

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

In the interest of promoting conceptual clarity and circumventing the potential ambiguities inherent in specialized terminology, the following section establishes operational definitions for the key terms utilized throughout this study. The definitions are provided to ensure consistency and accuracy in comprehending the concepts that are explained further in the later sections of this work.

Herdsmen: In the context of this research work, herdsmen, or pastoralists as well, is defined as the individual(s) who tend to maintain and rear the herd of animals, including cattle, goats, or sheep.

Food Production: This term is defined as the first step in the food chain, which includes all the processes involved in producing and harvesting agricultural products as well as animal husbandry.

Food Availability: The definition of this term is taken as the actual availability of the food items in the region, and this is largely dependent on the level of food production in the area.

Food Accessibility: The definition of this term is taken as the ability of people to access the available foods, which depends on economic as well as physical factors.

Food Utilizations: This word relates to the proper biological use of food, which requires a diet that provides adequate energy and nutrients, supported by essential prerequisites like clean water and adequate sanitation infrastructure, ensuring the population reaps the full nutritional benefit from their intake.

Food Security: This term serves as the overarching dependent outcome of this study. It is when there is a good environment for food production, accessing and utilizing it without any form of insecurity, and disruption of the availability of food products in the market.

1.9 EXPECTED BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

This study aims to yield academic and practical benefits by enhancing understanding of the herdsmen crisis in Benue State and articulating the complex relationship between insecurity and the decline in food production. The study is expected to play a crucial role in raising awareness by clearly articulating the complex relationship between insecurity and the observed decline in food production. However, the findings will serve as an essential foundation for evidence-based policy development and implementation.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The herdsmen crisis in Benue State, Nigeria, represents one of the most critical threats to both human security and national stability in contemporary West Africa. This chapter provides a comprehensive, critical review of relevant scholarly literature, policy, and documentary evidence to contextualize the Benue State conflict, identify core drivers, and evaluate its established impacts. Specifically, this literature review is structured to address the study's objective by critically examining the historical evolution and nature of the crisis. Moreover, it seeks to explain the application of the two theories such as, Eco Violent and Resource Access Theory, which the researcher used to explain the root causes; and as well to critically, and systematically assess the evidence connected to the failure of food security across its fundamental pillars.

2.2 HOMER-DIXON ECO-VIOLENCE THEORY

This theory was formulated by Homer-Dixon in 1999. The theory is helpful in the analysis of the emerging crisis among farmers and herdsmen. In this theory, the theorist considers factors related to population. He sees population as highly associated with scarcity of renewable resources. Scarcities of resources can create a crisis depending on the conditions. According to Homer-Dixon (1999), the high populations of many developing countries depend on environment-based resources for survival, which include fresh water, agricultural land, forests, and fish. Scarcity or depletion of these resources due to abuse, overexploitation or degradation, increased population, climate change, and lack of access will lead to competition for scarce resources, which may result in crisis under some conditions. This creates economic

and social pressures, including poverty, unemployment, and displacement of people.

Homer-Dixon (1999) argued:

> "Environmental scarcity causes 'social effects,' such as poverty and migrations, which in turn cause 'causal' links to sub-national violence. Scarcity of renewable resources such as cropland, fresh water, and forests produces civil conflict and instability" (Homer-Dixon, 1999, p. 30).

The phenomenon exists even today, and the effect of climate change, which causes ecological scarcity all around the world (Onuoha, 2007). The theory shows that the phenomenon has been caused by the desperation of the people to protect their economic interests in ecological spaces where there is resource scarcity, livelihood challenges, population growth, and resource competition. The theory suggests that scarcity of resources makes the people in society either fight for the resources and, in turn, cause ecological marginalization and violence between the groups. However, population growth and degradation of renewable resources are working differently to cause the scarcity of land, water, forests, and fish for some of the population groups (Adeoye, 2017). The need for herdsmen to survive in a competitive and scarce ecological environment creates a crisis. Hence, the herdsmen crisis has been brought about by the scarcity of land, which creates a struggle between the farmers and herdsmen for owning the land and for surviving. The scarcity of land has been caused by the shrinking and degradation of the ecological environment, cattle and human population explosion, and the scarcity of resources. Also, the farmers require land for cultivation, while the herdsmen require land for grazing and breeding of their cattle. Even though the critics claim that resource scarcity results from insufficient land resources, thus depriving some sections of the community of land resources, it may create conflict and loss of economic value during the crisis period.

2.3 JEFFREY AN D SALANCIK RESOURCE ACCESS THEORY

Propounded in the 1970s by Jeffrey and Salancik, the theory claims that there has been a crisis in the entire history of humankind. Mostly, this is a crisis that involves the competition for limited resources in human societies. Sikor and Lund (2009) observed a crisis in accessing natural resources at various levels. Legitimizing the right to access natural resources has always been essential in competition for them.

Jeffrey and Salancik (1978) explained:

> "When the environment is characterized by scarcity, the competition for access to critical resources becomes a zero-sum game. The dependence of one group on the resources controlled by another creates a power imbalance, which is the primary source of organizational and intergroup conflict"(Jeffrey and Salancik, 1978, p.257).

However, the issue of ownership of resources has shaped the nature of crises that have affected man since time immemorial. Of all the resources, land remains the main cause of crisis between different people. It is the limitation of access to grazing land by farmers against the herders that makes them be involved in the crisis between them and the community farmers in Nigeria. According to the theory, access to resources leads to crisis (Ikezue and Ezeah, 2017). The reason behind the crisis is that, because of limited access, the herdsmen felt compelled to take matters into their hands and drive their cattle onto other people's farmlands, resulting in the destruction of the farm produce. The herdsmen feel that they should have unrestricted access to grazing paths, which are their divine rights, and if anybody tries to deny them, then it will be opposed. However, the farmers can resist access to their farmlands by the herdsmen for protection. Apart from this, the researcher contends that the theory does not clarify the reason why some forms of deprivation of access to resources turn into collective actions, while in others, for example, the Sahel drought resource, they did not take place

without human coordination in the effort to change society. Even though the theory of access to resources has limitations, it is still relevant to the herdsmen crisis and food security in Nigeria.

2.4 CONCEPT OF FOOD SECURITY

The herdsmen crisis in Benue State, Nigeria, has had a great impact on food security because it disrupts agricultural production, livelihood systems, and the stability of the rural communities. This is the reason Jeffrey and Salancik's Resource Access Theory (1978) suggests that the state's ability to achieve sustainable food security depends not only on its agricultural potential but also on access to key productive resources and institutional support: government agencies, financial institutions, agricultural development programs, input suppliers, and research institutions. The consistent crisis between farmers and herdsmen has greatly affected farming activities and reduced the ability of the state to maintain its agricultural productivity which has led to economic devastation.

However, during the crisis, farms are often invaded by herdsmen with their grazing cattle in farming communities, causing a lot of destruction in their farms. In Pfeffer and Salancik's framework, highly volatile and hostile environments impair an actor's ability to secure vital inputs. In Benue State, the frequent invasion of farmland by grazing cattle creates extreme operational risk, destroying standing crops and rendering farmland unusable. These continued attacks have made many farmers abandon their land and means of livelihood out of fear of being killed, and flee to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, especially in rural areas where security is weak. As a result of the attack, large portions of land remain uncultivated during planting seasons, and this situation weakens household income and reduces the ability of families to obtain enough food. Moreover, the decline in farming activities reduces the quantity of food produced, which causes shortages in the supply of food in both

local and national markets. The ongoing nature of the herdsmen crisis in Benue State has discouraged the farmers from investing in long-term agricultural activities because of the constant threat of attacks and loss of property. Seasonal farming cycles are interrupted, and many communities struggle to recover from the repeated destruction by the herdsmen, which undermines the agricultural economy of the State and threatens the sustainability of food production over time in Benue State. In this manner, the herders' conflict has become more than a security problem but an important aspect that is leading to food insecurity in Benue State.

The continued crisis disrupts farming, displaces producers, damages food supply chains, and reduces the ability of households to maintain adequate and stable access to food. Addressing the crisis is therefore important for restoring agricultural production and strengthening food security in the state and across Nigeria. The basic requirement of mankind is food, which has influenced mankind's actions in history. The first thing which any man aims at achieving through all his endeavors is the answer to the problem of how to provide food for himself, for his family and even the whole world. This could be achieved if citizens were given free access to economic production and government support, as was suggested by the

Food and Agriculture Organization (1996) stated:

> "In a report from the World Food Summit, explaining that Food security is achieved when all people, at all times, have reliable physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO, 1996, p.7).

The theoretical explanation provided by the FAO shows that food security is a complex condition influenced by agricultural productivity, economic access, nutritional wellbeing, and stability of social and political environments. The herdsmen crisis in Benue State disrupts each of these conditions by damaging agricultural livelihoods, displacing farming populations, and

creating instability within the local food system. Pfeffer and Salancik's theory explains that food security is a multifaceted situation that is based on productive agriculture, economic access, proper nutrition, and political stability. Through limiting the supply of resources, displacement of agricultural labor, and disconnect from institutions, the crisis among herdsmen strips away each of the above factors, thus making it a critical element in the process of resolving the conflict and establishing food security in Benue State and Nigeria at large. Not only does the crisis affect agriculture but it also affects other elements needed to ensure food security in the region.

2.5 CONCEPT OF HERDSMEN

The herdsmen refer to the nomadic and semi-nomadic herdsmen whose main profession is rearing livestock. The herdsmen undertake not only random but also planned movements of transhumance. Amongst the key factors that drive the migration of herdsmen is the need to move to areas with enough grass and water for the cattle, according to Iro (1994). The movement of herdsmen into Benue State can be considered a clear link between the environmental degradation in the North, violence and food insecurity in the entire country, and the theory of Eco-violence by Homer Dixon. However, the herdsmen are abundant in the Sahel and the semi-arid regions of West Africa, but owing to changes in climate trends, most of the herdsmen migrate even to the savanna and tropical forests of West Africa. Herdsmen are found in countries such as Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Guinea, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, and Cameroon. Beef from the herdsmen constitutes the major part of beef consumed in Nigeria Iro (1994), and this was what caused violent clashes in Benue State of Nigeria. Furthermore, the herdsmen crisis in Benue State can be understood through this pastoral system. Most of the population depends on farming as their main economic activity, producing crops such as yam,

cassava, maize, rice, and soybeans. The herdsmen move southwards in search of greener pasture, mainly because of the environmental problems that face them in the northern part of Nigeria. The herdsmen move through the farms of local farmers in Benue State. It is at this point that conflicts arise between the two groups because the livestock graze on the farmers' farms, destroying their crops. It is because the local farmers rely on these crops for sustenance that conflicts occur. These conflicts have grown to become violent confrontations, leading to loss of life and displacement of the rural communities. Consequently, it has now turned into both a security issue and an economic one within the State. In case of a crisis, most farmers cannot engage in farming due to the fear of being attacked. In other instances, some villages have been forced to move from where they used to live and settle in internally displaced people's camps that do not enable them to engage in farming. Reduced agriculture has resulted in lower food supply in the markets. Since Benue State plays a major role in supplying food to other parts of Nigeria, the decline in agricultural production also affects food availability beyond the state. Since Benue State plays a major role in supplying food to other parts of Nigeria, the decline in agricultural production also affects food availability beyond the state. Consequently, the herdsmen crisis threatens both local livelihoods and national food security. The indigenous people always live in fear in their ancestral land.

Malthus {1978) argued:

> "Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio, while subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio, suggesting that when population growth exceeds the capacity of food production, food scarcity, resource competition, then hunger may intensify." (Malthus,1978, p.4).

The ideas of Malthus can be applied to explain the herdsmen crisis in Benue State. As the population of Nigeria continues to increase, the demand for land for farming, housing, and other economic activities has also increased. Traditionally, herdsmen move from one region

to another in search of pasture and water for their animals. However, as farming expands and populations increase, the amount of available grazing land becomes limited. This situation creates intense competition between farmers who need land to grow crops and herdsmen who need land to feed their cattle. The cattle herders may end up destroying crops that farmers rely on for survival as they graze on the cultivated land in search of pasture for their livestock. This might force farmers to take protective measures, and this will most likely cause fights and even violent confrontations between the two groups. The theory put forward by Homer-Dixon shows how the crisis of herdsmen in Benue is not just a simple territorial conflict, but a structural crisis, whereby the degradation of the environment causes migration, and then causes violent competition for resources. This, in turn, brings down not only the local livelihoods but also the national food security.

2.6 HERDSMEN AND FARMERS CLASHES

The prevailing opinion is that the attacks on the farmers by the herdsmen were premeditated and intended to drive the farmers away from their ancestral lands, and several people believe that the attacks had been meticulously planned and executed with full knowledge of some government and traditional leaders. According to Homer Dixon's theory, the movement of the herdsmen to Benue State leading to the crisis was motivated by the deterioration of the environment, including desertification, soil erosion, and change in rainfall patterns, forcing them to move from their ancestral lands in search for grazing lands in Benue State. However, by taking into consideration the nature of the attacks that have been conducted, there is research that argues that the attacks are not due to any encounter that they had with the farmers but are part of a series of pre-planned attacks with vengeance motives. In the view of the researcher, the people who hold this assumption see nationwide attacks as a series of actions that come out of well-thought-out plans.

Ekah (2014) stated:

> "The widespread attacks across Gwer West, Makurdi, Guma, Logo, and Kwande highlight the escalating insecurity in Benue State, while the use of superior weaponry and persistent violence intensifies fear, threatens civilian lives, and undermines peaceful coexistence" (p.52).

A holistic and proper examination of the persistent attacks in Benue State reveals the existence of multiple interpretations regarding the underlying causes of the crisis and its implications for agricultural productivity and food security. More often than not, the recurring conflicts between the herdsmen and the farmers in the state have not only caused great security problems but also endangered food production and the livelihood of the rural populace. The thinking in this school of thought is that the attacks on the communities in the state of Benue are far from being an accident but rather a carefully calculated effort to destabilize the region politically and/or religiously. It has been pointed out by the researcher that, according to the criticisms of others, there is a school of thought that believes that the attacks on the communities by the herdsmen are an organized attack associated with the expansionist ideology of the extremist Islamic group. And the attacks are comparable to the historical jihad campaigns in that they seek to dominate the religion after conquering the land. The problem is that such an explanation has been faulted on the grounds that it fails to consider the wider political and socio-economic complications of the multi-ethnicity of Nigeria's nation-state. Violence and criminality exhibit themselves differently depending on the regions within the nation-state, depending on their historical and socio-economic background. In the Northern region of Nigeria, for instance, insecurity has been attributed to ethno-religious fundamentalism, involving insurgencies by militant organizations. The Southeastern and South-Southern regions have had issues with kidnapping, armed robbery, youth militancy, and

sabotage of oil installations in the past. The same applies to the Southwest region, especially Lagos, where there is hooliganism and gangsterism called “Area boys”.

Although, there are other factors besides religion that need to be considered while analyzing the conflict between the herdsmen in Benue State because the conflict is not just confined to religious motivations but needs to be viewed considering economic and environmental considerations in the country. However, despite all these regional variations, it has been argued by some that the extremists in the herdsmen group work alongside insurgent groups like Boko Haram and other mercenaries. Based on this understanding, the conflict has led to the destruction of people’s lives and property in the farming villages in Benue State. Instead, more often than not, the farmers have resorted to abandoning their farms because of insecurity, resulting in low agricultural output and food supply. The argument became even more convincing after it was revealed that soldiers had been taken prisoner during attacks by militiamen on Tiv farming villages in the state, indicating that there is something more to the attack than just communal clashes. Those supporting the argument also cite the fact that there have been insufficient measures by the security agencies to stop the killings despite the huge presence of military and security forces in the area. In many cases, the places that have witnessed attacks have major security installations such as army barracks, tactical air command, naval training centers, and mobile police units. However, the rural villages and farms are still experiencing violent raids.

The constant occurrences of such attacks have led to fear among the locals, leading to reluctance in engaging in farming activities thus reducing food production and jeopardizing the food security of the country and even the nation as a whole. However, this study identifies political motives for the violence rather than religious motivations for expansion. In the case of the latter, it is argued that the violence that occurred prior to the 2015 general elections was

aimed at destabilizing some regions and reducing the influence of the dominating individuals in such areas. According to the theory by Homer-Dixon, environmental scarcities put great pressure on state institutions. Moreover, the attack was meant to discredit the leadership of the areas that predominantly supported the People's Democratic Party (PDP). This would in turn discredit the administration of the then President, Goodluck Jonathan. Despite the motive of the conflict, the effects on the rural communities have been devastating, especially the effect on food production.

Unlike these political explanations, leaders of the herdsmen have focused on resource competition as the basic reason for the violence. Muhammed Bello, secretary-General of the Myetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, gave his explanation in an interview with an online newspaper on why there is violence, stating that the conflicts are mainly caused by competition for grazing areas and water.

Tyohmba (2014) said:

> "The herdsmen crisis in Benue State is fundamentally driven by competition over scarce natural resources, particularly land, grazing pasture, and water, with the increasing pressure on these resources intensifying tensions and escalating violent confrontations between farmers and herdsmen." (p.34).

The resource competition approach is very appropriate in analyzing the link between the herdsmen crisis and food security in Benue State. As a result of desertification and climate change in the Northern part of Nigeria, the herdsmen keep moving towards the southern regions in search of pastureland, leading to an increased intrusion into farmland in the Middle Belt region. Politically, the matter of insecurity in the north has also attracted much controversy between the federal government and the state governments. Political dynamics and governance failures have been identified as underlying factors contributing to Nigeria's

persistent security challenges. Former President Goodluck Jonathan reportedly criticized some northern state governors for inadequate investment in education and socio-economic development, arguing that such shortcomings increased youths' vulnerability to recruitment into insurgent groups. Although this criticism focused primarily on the Boko Haram insurgency, its broader implications are relevant to the herdsmen crisis in Benue State. Persistent poverty, unemployment, weak institutional responses, and inadequate rural development may exacerbate existing tensions between farmers and herders, intensify competition over land and other natural resources, and undermine effective conflict prevention. In Benue State, these governance challenges are particularly significant because recurring violence has disrupted farming activities, displaced rural communities, and weakened agricultural production, thereby threatening the livelihoods of farming households and the food security of the state.

In essence, the intricacy of the herdsmen issue in Benue State clearly shows that the problem is a complex one and hence cannot be traced back to one reason. It is a combination of religious differences, political rivalries, environmental factors, resource scarcity, and poor governance practices that have resulted in continued violence. In addition to posing a threat to national security, it has posed challenges to the country's food security and rural economy. Homer-Dixon's Theory of Environmental Scarcity holds that scarcity does not directly result in violence; it causes intermediary social effects which ultimately explode into violence, explaining why farming communities have continued to suffer displacement and loss of farmlands resulting to abandoning of farms and moving into Internally Displaced People camps while the ability of Benue state to continue its role of food production in the country has been compromised. Without such measures, the continued disruption of farming activities in Benue State will further exacerbate food insecurity both within the state and across Nigeria

as a whole (Tyohmba, 2014).

2.7 HERDSMEN CRISIS IN NIGERIA: CAUSES AND DYNAMICS

The literature identifies land scarcity, migration, climate change, population growth, and weak governance as the major causes of the herdsmen crisis and food security in Benue State, Nigeria. From the perspective of Homer-Dixon's Eco-violence Theory, competition over scarce natural resources intensifies farmer–herder tensions and violent conflict. These conflicts disrupt agricultural activities, destroy crops, displace farming communities, and reduce food production and access, thereby exacerbating food insecurity across the state.

2.7.1 LAND SCARCITY

Conflict has mostly been experienced in plural societies. Conflicts have increasingly become common in Nigeria, with the conflicts occurring in all the regions in which humans struggle to make a living. Upon analyzing the primary reasons behind conflicts between the herdsmen and farmers, it is clear that the main cause of most of the conflicts is the scarcity of land, especially for grazing. In simple terms, conflicts between people due to economic competition for land lead to conflict in society. This situation applies to the concept of environmental scarcity theory that was put forth by Thomas Homer-Dixon. According to Thomas Homer-Dixon, environmental scarcity occurs due to three factors: induced scarcity due to population growth, supply-induced scarcity due to land degradation and industrialization, and structural scarcity due to unequal distribution of key resources. As the population has grown, more land has been cleared for cultivation, settlements, roads, and other development. Areas that were once open fields or part of traditional grazing routes are now used permanently for crop production. For farmers, expansion is necessary. Although the shrinking of land forces herdsmen to move through or settle in areas that are already being

farmed with their cattle, which destroys their farm products, farmers often respond defensively, which will make herdsmen feel that their livelihood is being confronted and threatened, and this will lead to the crisis. As a result of increasing pressure on the land, the cultivation area was decreased by the farmers for fear of being attacked; therefore, there have been changes in the complications related to the land utilization system, which have thus become the dependent variable in herdsmen-farmers conflicts.

2.7.2 MIGRATION

The migration of herdsmen to Nigeria is not well known, and it remains an academic discussion. It is thought that the herdsmen started moving to the plains of Bauchi Emirate and moved to the Benue grassland area for grazing purposes owing to the increased/decreased intensity and frequency due to many reasons, including economic and environmental as stated in the Homer Dixon's theory (combination of demand and supply induced scarcity). Changing environmental conditions reduces the availability of viable grazing land, while expanding population sizes increases the overall demand for sustenance. When herders relocate without prior negotiation or formal agreements, it demonstrates an institutional failure to manage spatial access. The migration of herdsmen to Benue State was not negotiated because of population size, and most of the herdsmen were not ready. In most cases, because of a lack of agreement, most of the herdsmen, when migrating, do not pass through the main entrance but rather on cultivated land, which destroys farm products. Moreover, their arrival causes great competition over land, leading to the crisis.

2.7.3 CLIMATE CHANGE

Homer Dixon's Theory demonstrates the relationship between climate change, environmental scarcity resulting from climate change, environmental degradation, and unequal access to natural resources for survival, compelling many herdsmen to migrate for

grazing land. Climate change in Nigeria extends beyond mere environmental shifts and resource pressures that fuel the herdsmen crisis in Benue State. In Northern Nigeria, where herdsmen lives are hotter and drier over the past decades. Rainfall is more unpredictable, and when it does it comes, it's often shorter and less distributed compared to other parts of the region in Nigeria. This climate condition causes more land degradation, and less vegetation and rivers often dry up because of this condition. For herdsmen whose livelihood depends entirely on the health of pasture and access to water, these environmental changes make it difficult for them to remain in one place. These environmental changes do not only affect the North. In Benue State itself, rainfall patterns have become unpredictable as well. Farmers rely heavily on seasonal rains to cultivate their farmland. When rain arrives late, it could cause floods, and it will heavily affect farm crops. The interaction between climate change and land use is particularly important, but as conditions worsen in the north, more herdsmen move to the south, increasing population pressure on land use in Benue State. Despite the usefulness of Homer-Dixon's theory, it was criticized for paying much attention to environmental scarcity resulting from climate change rather than political, religious, economic, cultural, and ethnic issues that contributed to the crisis as well, which limited understanding of the crisis entirely.

2.7.4 POPULATION GROWTH

Homer-Dixon's theory argues that environmental scarcity is a major factor that contributes to violent conflict, particularly in developing countries where livelihoods depend heavily on access to land, water, and other renewable resources. At the same time, as population grows, more land is converted into farmland and settlements, reducing the amount of land available for grazing livestock, and these changes force herdsmen to migrate for grazing. However, better health and higher population have put more pressure on the land. There has, therefore, been an evident expansion of cultivation in the Fadama (riverine and

valley-bottom) areas since the 1980s. This is because both the farmers and the herdsmen have found themselves in fierce competition for the valuable lands. Some of the characteristics of the current harmony and discord between herdsmen and sedentarism include better decentralization and a high number of herdsmen, hence frequent conflicts with agrarian communities (Blench, 2010). The situation is often worsened by weak governance, poor land administration, inadequate security, and ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms to regulate grazing activities and enforce a strong land policy; inadequate security has allowed disputes over natural resources to escalate into prolonged violence. The level of harmony and tension existing between the herdsmen and the farmers triggers some perceptions especially in the way conflict and cooperation occur, hence the inevitability of the collapse of law and order (Blench, 1984). IN addition, the theory is strengthened when considered alongside political, economic, and institutional factors that also influence the occurrence and persistence of the conflict.

2.7.5 WEAK GOVERNANCE AND POLICY FAILURES

Homer-Dixon's theory clearly states that environmental scarcity does not inevitably lead to violent conflict, but instead conflict is more likely when governments lack the capacity to effectively manage scarce resources and address the social and economic pressures arising from scarcity. In Benue State, weak governance and policy failures have significantly contributed to the escalation of the herdsmen crisis and resulting food insecurity. The complexity in the management of resources by the herdsmen, however, in most cases stems from the uncertainty in the claims and counterclaims about the pasture, water, and other resources. The complexity in the management of such resources is also marked by the presence of certain flexible and reciprocal rules. The land is the major resource base of the herdsmen, but it is not an individual and immutable resource whose utilization and access are

known (Sandford and Habtu, 2000). In light of the fact that the herdsmen roam endlessly with their herd of cattle searching for new lands in the hostile environment, it comes naturally for them to give way to the natural forces, and the primary aim is to ensure the safety of their cattle. The security of the herdsmen's lifestyle depends upon the state of their herd and grazing ecosystem, which is mutually dependent on grazing pasture, watering holes, and other environmental and socio-economic conditions.

Thus, whenever the state is merely paying tribute to the safety and security of its citizens' means of livelihood, such as cattle and farmland, without any assurances, fear and mistrust creep in among the people because of failure in enforcing and implementing the grazing law and land use law properly. The people do not place any checks on themselves and collectively in protecting their resources and lives from harm. Safety and security being rare commodities, only those who can afford safety and security provide it to themselves at the cost of others, even at the risk of harm from the same. Another issue that may be considered regarding the failure of the state in solving problems of settlers and indigenes, amongst others, is how it brings out the economic and political elements in the herdsmen-farmers' conflict (Fiki & Lee, 2004). From the views of Homer-Dixon's theory, weak governance transforms environmental scarcity into violent conflict because institutions fail to manage competition over natural resources effectively. Therefore, strengthening governance through effective policy implementation, improved land administration, enhanced security, sustainable ranching policies, climate adaptation measures, and efficient conflict resolution mechanisms is essential for reducing the herdsmen crisis and improving food security in Benue State, as well as increasing accessibility and production of food.

2.8 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The relationship between the herdsmen crisis and food security in Nigeria has been

extensively researched by many scholars because both factors are related to agriculture, livelihood, and sustainable development of the country. The state of Benue State is known as the "Food Basket of the Nation," but it has faced many conflicts between the farmers and the herdsmen that have resulted in severe repercussions in food production, food distribution and food security of the households. The findings of Nnaji et al. (2022) are clear indications that the crisis has affected the status of food insecurity and livelihoods in rural communities and has caused disturbance in the production of agriculture. The research conducted is an empirical review of literature on the causes and effects of the herdsmen crisis on agricultural production in Nigeria.

The impacts of the Fulani herders' conflict with farmers on food security in Benue State were examined by Okoli and Addo (2018). This study used the ex-post facto research design, and the Eco-violence theory served as its framework. Secondary data were employed in this study in the form of information collected from government documents, scholarly articles, among others. It was established that repeated attacks on the farms had caused food insecurity in terms of destruction of farmlands, displacement of the farming families, and disruption of their farming practices. According to the researchers, the conflict posed a great threat to food sufficiency in Benue State and suggested the introduction of a ranching system and security measures for the safety of the agricultural community. Nonetheless, this research did not incorporate any primary data in its findings.

According to Ake et al. (2023), the effects of herder-farmer conflicts on food security in Benue State were examined through a quantitative methodology. Ake et al. (2023) used a multistage sampling method in order to obtain a sample size of 1,600 farmers whose data was analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics. It was found out that repeated attacks against farming communities have caused low-quality and low quantity of food production since it

prevented farmers from cultivation of their farms, destruction of crops, and withdrawal of many families from agricultural activities. The authors suggest that insecurity has become a significant impediment to food security in Benue State. Despite the strength of the empirical evidence presented in the article, the analysis is focused on farming families.

Yusufu et al. (2020) in their study aimed at assessing the effects of resource scarcity and farmer herder conflict on food security in Benue State. A descriptive survey research design was employed in the study. 360 respondents were selected using the multi-stage sampling design. Descriptive statistics and chi-square analysis were employed in analyzing the data collected. In this study, an important relationship between conflicts and food security is discussed from a statistical point of view regarding food availability, access and sustainability. The authors argue that this ongoing conflict has had an effect on agricultural productivity due to denying the farmers access to fertile land. In addition, they recommended political will, better conflict resolution methods and proper resource management. Nevertheless, this study focused on resource conflict but did not examine the effects of population growth on food security.

Ekanem (2022) examined the link between resource shortages and the conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and Tiv farmers in Benue State from a qualitative perspective using documentation as sources of evidence. The findings show that environmental destruction and climate change-induced movement increased the struggle over access to land and water resources, hence leading to violence between the two groups. This led to the disruption of food production processes, affecting the food security of the affected communities. Environmental factors alone could not fully explain why the conflict persisted; good governance and proper management of the resources were very critical. While the study makes some important theoretical contributions, its use of qualitative secondary data does not

generalize empirical results. Onojah and Anchovur (2025) explored the impacts of herder-farmer conflicts on food security in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State via a cross-sectional survey involving 394 participants who were selected using a multistage sampling technique. A review of the literature suggested that land encroachment, poor security measures, and ineffective policy implementation regarding anti-open grazing were major factors responsible for the herder-farmer conflict. Moreover, it was found in the study that the crisis had resulted in food insecurity, as it made it difficult for farmers to access their lands and produce crops. The authors suggested enhanced security measures and policy enforcement. However, despite being recent and empirical, the results of the study are based only on one local government area.

Empirically. From the literature available, it is evident that the herders' crisis has emerged as a major factor contributing to food insecurity in Benue State. From the reviewed literature, it is apparent that the conflicts have affected food security by interfering with agricultural production through destruction of crops, displacement of agricultural populations, inability to access farms, disruption of rural markets, and low household income levels. However, there are some shortcomings in the reviewed literatures as most of them have used secondary data. In addition, limited attention has been given to the interaction between population growth, governance failures, and resource scarcity in shaping the relationship between the herdsmen crisis and food security. These gaps justify further empirical investigation to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of food security in conflict-affected communities in Benue State.

2.9 HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. Insecurity has negatively affects the availability of food in Benue State
2. Displacement of farmers affects the production and stability of food in Benue State

3. Disability and death of farmers seriously affect the accessibility of food in Benue State.

2.10 RELATED STUDIES

In an article titled " Beyond Resource Scarcity" Amoah et al. (2025) found that conflict based solely on resource scarcity is inadequate. They proposed an integrated framework that also considers political, social, and economic factors to better understand and address the complexities of the issue.

In a study, Olumba et al. (2022) studied water and agricultural resource conflicts in the Sahel and found that existing labels focusing on ethnicity or occupation were insufficient. The study proposed the term "eco-violence" as a more comprehensive concept to describe conflicts arising from environmental resource competition.

Also, Ewoh et al. (2025) studied the herdsmen crisis and governance in Nigeria and found that failures in governance are core drivers of the crisis. The study explained how weak state institutions, ineffective policies, and poor conflict management mechanisms have raised great tension between herdsmen and farming communities.

Olumba (2024) examined the escalation of eco-violence in Nigeria's Middle Belt and found that environmental factors were core driver causing a sporadic crisis over land crop and water into daily occurrence of mass violence.

Stoett (2012) studied the link between environmental security and land conflict and found that while security can lead to violence, the theme of justice is an equally important component. The work proposed shifting the focus from eco-violence to a broader environmental justice framework

Olumba (2023) explored the persistence of conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt and found that the crisis is sustained by a combination of rooted historical, political, and environmental factors that require a comprehensive approach to resolve.

Okoli (2020), in an article titled "Herders-Farmers Conflict and Food Insecurity in Nigeria," found that the frequent clashes between herders and farmers have led to the destruction of farmlands, loss of livestock, and displacement of rural populations. The research emphasizes the need for government intervention and conflict management policies to address the growing food crisis.

2.11 GAP IN LITERATURE

There have been several studies undertaken on the prevalence of the herdsmen crisis in Nigeria, while there have been other studies that have focused on the socio-economic, financial, and political implications of the herdsmen crisis on national development in Nigeria. This research highlights that there have been several studies on the herdsmen crisis in Nigeria, but with no sufficient focus on the implications of the herdsmen crisis on food security in Benue State as the food production state.

This study seeks to avoid broadness and provides evidence with regard to this specific case, where the consequence of the crisis disrupts the cultivation, harvest, and distribution cycle. It can be said, therefore, that the main objective of the study is to bridge the gap between security studies and agricultural economics. The achievement of national development cannot be accomplished by any means of political or economic reform if the fundamental issue of food security is ignored. By focusing on Benue State, it is hoped that the research will prove that the herdsmen crisis is not just an ethnic problem but is a major impediment to the food

security of all Nigerians, which has led to the degradation of the economic value of Benue State and investment in human capital development. It is also a threat to the political system because it has instilled fear in a large number of people in Benue State, which has made them not actively participate in any political affairs.

2.12 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TWO

In this chapter, there is the theoretical framework that explains the study of the persistence crisis among pastoralists and farmers in Benue State, Nigeria. Although it acknowledges the full range of the existing knowledge base regarding the existence of the conflict and its overall socio-economic impacts as described in the literature, the chapter acknowledges an important gap: the lack of sufficient focus on the consequences of the persistence crisis in terms of food security, particularly in Benue State. The gap is addressed by employing the eclectic theory of "Eco-violence and Research Access theory."

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research adopted a qualitative method in studying the effect of herdsmen conflict on food security in Benue State. This type of research design is appropriate for analyzing complex social issues and human experiences in actual situations. As explained by Bogdan & Biklen (2007), "qualitative research involves an interpretive, descriptive approach to the study of social phenomena." On the other hand, Creswell (2014) added that it enables researchers to understand the meanings attached to social problems. The study heavily relied on secondary sources including reports from the International Crisis Group, Food and Agriculture Organization, National Bureau of Statistics, and United Nations Development Program, as well as academic journals and newspaper reports like The Guardian Nigeria and Vanguard Newspaper. However, using a qualitative analysis of these documents, the study examined how the persistent crisis between herdsmen and farmers has disrupted agricultural production and threatened food security in Benue State.

3.2 DATA SOURCES

THE SECONDARY DATA

The research is characterized by the wide use of secondary data to gather information regarding the impact of the herdsmen crisis and food security in Benue State, Nigeria. The sources used in gathering the information included reports from the International Crisis Group, Food and Agriculture Organization, National Bureau of Statistics, United Nations Development Program, among others such as The Guardian Nigeria and Vanguard Newspaper.

3.3 INCLUSION CRITERIA

To make sure that the data gathered were relevant and reliable, there were some standards to use when considering secondary sources for use. First, all sources must be from 2017, when the experiences of Nigerians in real time during the conflict between herdsmen and farmers were being considered. Second, sources that originated from credible institutions such as peer-reviewed scholarly journals and books, and reports by international organizations were suitable for this study. Third, sources published in English were used to ensure the understanding of the data collected. Preferably, sources published in 2017 and beyond, especially those that were published after 2022, were given more priority

3.4 EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Sources which were found to be non-verifiable or those which were not reliable were not considered. Sources which were not relevant to the topic or those which failed to contribute to the understanding of the farmer's experience of the herder’s crisis were not included in the review. Sources written in other languages apart from English were not considered because of the challenge involved in translating the documents. Outdated sources, as well as those that were published before 2017, were not included since their information might not be accurate. Finally, duplicate sources that gave almost similar information were ignored.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The data collection process involved looking out for some keywords such as "nomad-farmer conflict and food security," "impact of farmers-herders conflict on food security, " and "impact of herdsmen-farmers clashes in Nigeria and its effect on food security." Every piece of data was critically evaluated according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria defined above to determine the relevance and credibility of the data. Targeted data were then selected from the sources, which included the experiences of evacuees, safety and security problems,

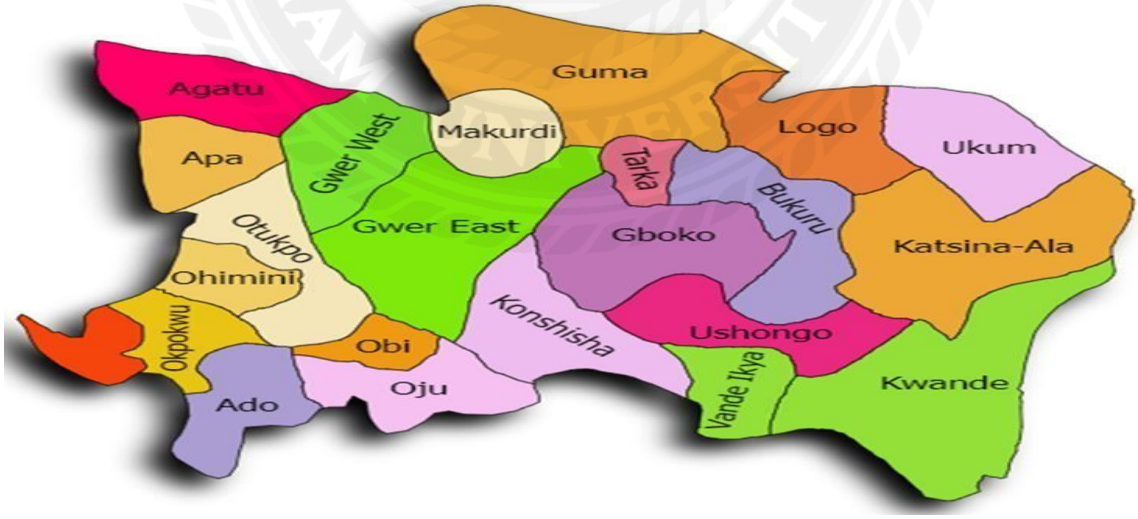
challenges in receiving humanitarian assistance, and participation of the Nigerian government

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The study relied heavily on secondary data collection using a descriptive content analysis. Information from different sources was compared and synthesized to identify recurring themes, trends, and patterns relating to the impact of the herdsmen crisis on food security in Benue State.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical considerations of using the data were fully observed when acquiring and using the secondary data for the research. The ethical considerations were well addressed by making sure that all the data used in the research were obtained from different sources of information. All citations and references were made properly during the course of the research in order to give credit to the writers of the information and institutions. Moreover, the data were presented in an objective way without any form of manipulation of information.



PICTURE 1: MAP OF BENUE STATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The study focused on the way the data was collected, presented, analyzed, and interpreted with respect to the impact of the herdsmen crisis and food security in Benue State. The aim was to transform the raw data into a structure that expresses the ongoing crisis and its implications within the study area. The researcher's analysis was sourced from various Nigerian daily newspapers and an international conflict dataset. The chapter seeks to make provision for a comprehensive outlook on how environmental competition and crisis disruptions serve as significant barriers to agricultural productivity and regional stability.

4.2 REPORT ON THE NUMBER OF ATTACKS AND NUMBER OF PEOPLE KILLED BY HERDSMEN BETWEEN 2012 AND 2017

Table 2 Report on the Number of the Attacks

	DATE	ATTACK	MEDIA SOURCE/ DATE
1.	July 8 2012	The deaths of the senator, Gyang Dantong, and the Majority Leader of the Plateau State House of Assembly, Mr. Gyang Fulani, occurred when the two were present at the mass burial of about 50 people who had been attacked by cattle herders in Maseh Village.	Premium Times and Sahara Reporters July 8 and July 9, 2012
2.	April 23, 2013	Ten farmers were murdered in an ambush in the Mbasenge village, Guma L.G.A by suspected herdsmen.	Daily Trust Newspaper April 23, 2013
3.	May 7, 2013	47 people were massacred by suspected herdsmen in Agatu during the burial of two police.	Daily Trust Newspaper May 7, 2013

4.	May 14, 2013	Over 200 herdsmen besieged Ekwo-Okpanchenyi, Agatu LGA, resulting in the murder of 40 people.	Trust Newspaper May 14, 2013,
5.	July 5, 2013	20 people were murdered in a dispute between Tiv farmers and herdsmen in Nzorov, Guma LGA.	Daily Trust and Vanguard May 20, 2013,
6.	May 22, 2013	In revenge for the death of 112 cows, herdsmen attacked 2 villages in Agatu LGA, murdering 8 people.	Daily Trust Newspaper May 23, 2013,
7.	November 7, 2013,	Attacks hit the Ikpele and Okpopolo communities, killing seven people and displacing more than 6,000 residents.	Vanguard News November 8, 2013
8.	November 9, 2013,	Thirty-six people were killed and seven villages occupied during an escalation in clashes between herdsmen and local farmers in Agatu L.G.A.	Daily Trust and Vanguard November 10, 2013,
9.	June 5, 2015,	Cattle herdsmen attacked the Motokun village in Patigi L.G.A., Kwara State. The Oro-Ago community in Ifelodun L.G.A., Kwara State, was also raided.	Vanguard and Daily Trust June 5, 2015.
10.	July 15, 2015,	Cattle herders attacked and killed farmers in Plateau.	Daily Trust Vanguard and the Punch . July 16, 2015,
11.	October 1, 2015,	Ogun residents, farmers, were raped and killed by cattle herders.	Vanguard Newspaper October 2, 2015.
12.	November 2015	Cattle herders attacked the Ulaja and Ojeh communities of the Dekina Local Government Area in Kogi State and killed an estimated 22 men and women.	Daily Sun November,2015

13.	Nov 30, 2015,	Cattle herders murdered man in Ofagbe Community, Isoko North Council in Delta.	Vanguard December 1, 2015.
14.	January 23, 2016,	Police DPO: 29 others were killed by suspected cattle herdsmen in Nigeria.	Vanguard Newspaper January 24, 2016,
15.	February 7, 2016,	10 dead, over 300 displaced in farmers, herdsmen clash in Tom Anyiin, Tom Ataan in Buruku LGA.	Premium Times February 8, 2016
16.	February 10, 2016,	Two siblings and some buildings and motorcycles were destroyed when herdsmen raided Abbi in UzoUwani LGA, Enugu.	Vanguard Newspaper Feb 11, 2016.
17.	February 29, 2016,	More than 500 people died and 7000 displaced following an attack by cattle herders on residents in Agatu LGA	Vanguard Newspaper March 1, 2016.
18.	March 9, 2016,	8 people died during raids by herdsmen in Ngorukgan, Tse Chia, Deghkia and Nhumbe, Logo LGA.	Daily Trust March 10, 2016,
19.	April 4, 2016,	Mr. Aondohemba Kasa, APC youth leader, and 3 others died due to a raid by fresh cattle herdsmen and farmers in Benue.	The Punch April 5, 2016,
20.	April 7, 2016	Falae's guard was kidnapped and killed by cattle herdsmen in his Ondo State farm.	Premium Times April 8, 2016
21.	April 8, 2016,	The Fulani settlement was burnt down after the murder of a 64-year-old farmer named Alex in Edo.	Vanguard Newspaper April 9, 2016

22.	April 11, 2016,	Attacks on Dori and Mesuma villages by Fulani herdsmen in Taraba, leading to the death of at least 15.	Premium Times April 12, 2016
23.	April 18, 2016,	A member of around 18 suspected herdsmen who raided farmlands in Lagun village of Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State was murdered, Mr. Jimmy Aido.	The Guardian (Nigeria) April 19, 2016
24.	April 25, 2016,	Forty-eight people died, sixty others wounded in attacks by cattle herders in Ukpabi Nimbo village in Enugu State.	Vanguard Premium Times, and Daily Post, April 25-26, 2016
25.	April 26, 2016,	Another six bodies were discovered in Enugu State; the body count is now forty-six. Governor Ugwuanyi declared a two-day fast and prayer for the deceased people who were murdered by cattle herdsmen.	The Punch April 27, 2016

Source: This was compiled by the researcher from various Nigerian daily newspapers (Daily Trust, Vanguard, Premium Times, with support from Conflict datasets; International Crisis Group (2017).

4.3 HERDSMEN CRISIS AND FOOD SECURITY

The crisis that exists today between farmers and herdsmen in Benue State is no longer a crisis that exists within the local community but a calculated erosion of the sovereignty of Nigeria in its food production. Crop farming and livestock rearing form the core activities for the economic survival of the people; hence, the herdsmen crisis will have great implications on the food system. In most cases, during a crisis, the tactics of manipulation involving food and livestock become the strategy adopted by both sides. Food insecurity then becomes an after-effect of the communal crisis (Messer & Cohen, 2004).

The crisis is linked to food security and, in almost all cases, will lead to low levels of production and income from cash crops and livestock. Low levels of production and income will have great impacts on food security since this will lower the ability of those who rely on food resources for their sustenance. Food and Agriculture Organization (2004) reported that communal violence has cost Nigeria an estimated $12 billion worth of agricultural production in the last two decades of the twentieth century due to the critical nature of agricultural livelihood to the wellbeing of the economy as a whole, especially in conflict areas in Nigeria. Apart from limiting the level of food production, the crisis also increases the likelihood of denying others access to food resources. Food Research Policy Institute (2004), the majority of the conflicts and post-conflict areas in the north-eastern part of Nigeria are characterized by food insecurity

Assessment Capacity Project (2017) reported:

> "Approximately 132,818 are said to be facing IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) levels of food insecurity in Benue, 167.561 in Plateau, and 212,348 in Kaduna states as of December 2016, with 12,063 in Phase 4 in Plateau state. 46,000 are projected to face crisis food security conditions in Benue, Kaduna, and Plateau states from June to August 2017," (p. 12).

From the research done by the Food Research Policy Institute (2004), the majority of the zones of the North-Eastern part of Nigeria have been found to have large numbers of people suffering from food insecurity. The herdsmen must play an important role in the economy of Nigeria. The herdsmen are the main people who raise cattle, providing meat as a protein resource for Nigerians. It is clear from the results of the research that nearly 90% of the livestock constitute about a third of agricultural GDP and 3.2% of the total GDP of the country (Eniola, 2010). It is impossible to overstate the importance of the role of herdsmen in food provision and food security in the country. Nonetheless, according to the research conducted by Abughdyer (2016), about 664.4 hectares (56.4%) of the land cultivated was destroyed in Benue State in the period 2010-2014 in the local governments of Agatu, Guma and Logo due to the farmer/herdsmen conflicts. These specific destructions have led to great hardship, poverty, and starvation. The government did not respond actively to address the problem. At least some help would have been a good gesture, so that the victims can start on their own with what will be given by the government.

4.4 INSECURITY AND AVAILABILITY OF FOOD IN BENUE STATE

The herdsmen problem is widespread and a complicated one with regard to the production of food in Benue State, as not only does it have an immediate effect on the lives of the concerned people, but also threatens the future sustainability of food production for the rural areas (Ukamaka et al., 2017). It creates a vicious cycle of poverty and hunger and undermines the social status of the affected parties, as well as their food security, thus primarily harming the most vulnerable people in the community, especially women and children (Ikezue & Ezeah, 2017). The livelihood, wellbeing, and food security of the farmers are put in danger by the crisis, thus leading to poverty, malnutrition, and food insecurity among the farmers. (Ibrahim et al., 2015) Note that the herdsmen problem caused a substantial rise in the price of export of the essential products of the north, such as cowpeas, maize, millet, rice, and sorghum, to other regions of Nigeria and Cameroon.

4.5 DISPLACEMENT, DISABILITY AND DEATH OF FARMERS

The herdsmen crisis in Nigeria has reached such an unbearable level, causing the loss of life and destruction of property. As reported by Anyabe et al. (2017), the herdsmen crisis is a situation that results in the loss of life and destruction of property. The herdsmen crisis in Nigeria has reached such a level that many people have lost their lives and property because of the herdsmen crisis. One of the effects of the herdsmen crisis is the loss of farmlands by the farming community through internal displacement, according to Adebayo & Olaniyi (2008). According to Olabode & Ajibade (2010), due to the herdsmen crisis, there has been displacement of farmers from their farms due to the destruction of their farms by the invaders.

It is indicated in the work of Olabode and Ajibade (2010, p. 259) that " the herdsmen crisis led to displacement of farmers from their farmlands due to destruction of farms, which led the farmers to leave their fertile farmlands as a way of escaping from the crisis." It can be seen that the herdsmen crisis has led to displacement of farmers, more widows and orphans, migration to marginal zones, as well as a poor agricultural environment (Ukamaka et al., 2017). According to Goodhead (2001) (cited in Abass, 2012), hunger, which causes diseases and poverty, is one of the most disastrous effects of war/crisis.

4.6 DESTRUCTION OF FARM PRODUCTS IN BENUE STATE

Benue State, as food production state, which is heavily dependent on for survival as a primary source of livelihood in most rural communities, has even affected the food availability significantly due to the herdsmen crisis and it’s a breakdown on both regional food security and national stability. The crisis has inflicted devastating consequences beyond the widespread destruction of farms and agricultural land by cattle movement, serving as a tool of displacement and psychological warfare. The cultivated fields are frequently invaded and destroyed by cattle belonging to herdsmen, which could be viewed from the resource access theory as a competition

between the herdsmen and the farmers, which creates a violent zero-sum game. In most cases, attacks during the crisis have also resulted in the burning of farms, storage facilities, and rural farm settlements. The actions cause the destruction of months of hard work and financial investment by farmers, leaving them with little or no means of livelihood. More often, many farmers incur heavy financial losses and debts running into millions of naira, which deepens poverty among rural households.

When crops are destroyed before harvest, farmers lose both their primary source of food and the income they would have generated from selling agricultural produce in local markets. Consequently, this leads to the loss of hope among farmers returning to their farmlands due to the fear of attacks and the destruction of their farm produce. Many agricultural farms have been left abandoned due to this problem in different areas of Benue State, and this has led to a reduction in the amount of food produced in the state. Furthermore, the crisis has contributed significantly to raising the prices of food products in the state. Foods like maize, yam tubers, and cassava are now being sold at prices that are way beyond the reach of most citizens. This has caused a lack of purchasing power on the part of many households to afford sufficient food for their homes. Some people are eating only what they can afford to buy, while others find it difficult to meet their nutritional requirements. The food available is not enough to meet family members' dietary requirements for their diets. In some cases, poor peasants cannot afford to eat balanced meals because of the increased cost, while many others cannot eat three times a day. At this point, people are waiting for the government.

4.7 DISRUPTION OF AGRICULTURAL MARKETS IN BENUE STATE

The herdsmen crisis in Benue State has significantly disrupted the normal functioning of agricultural markets and the broader food supply system. Persistent insecurity in rural areas restricts farmers' ability to transport agricultural produce to urban markets, while traders are often unwilling to travel to high-risk places where violent attacks are frequent. Due to security issues, some of the local markets have been closed down for some time in most communities, which has affected the agricultural commodity chain. The interruptions lead to inefficiency in the provision of agricultural commodities, causing food shortages in urban areas. In addition, the farmers who can grow and harvest the agricultural commodities often face challenges in marketing them. Thus, market instabilities contribute to the problems of price fluctuations and lack of access to affordable food, hence the problem of food insecurity in vulnerable communities. In recent years, the situation has become worse in Nigeria and other parts of West Africa, resulting in death, destruction of property, population displacement, and livelihood disruption (Udemezue & Anedo, 2016). Such conflicts are usually caused by structural problems, including scarcity of land resources, inconsistency in policy, and incompatibility of livelihood systems between farmers and herders (Moritz, 2010; Adisa, 2011). Usually, the competition for land and water sources is increased by the increase in population, increase in agricultural activities, and a growing number of cattle herds. It has contributed to the increase in the intensity of conflicts between both sides. As Goheen (1996) argued, the incompatibility of livelihood objectives between the farmers and herders leads to an inevitable crisis, especially in a resource-scarce environment. Similarly, De Haan (2002) explained that while the farmers perceive the crisis as destruction of crops due to cattle herding, the herders view it as blockage of grazing and watering points.

Adisa (2011) stated:

> "The intensification of the herdsmen crisis across Nigeria, particularly within the Middle Belt region, has profoundly disrupted agricultural production systems and undermined the stability of rural market structures. Persistent insecurity not only restricts farmers' physical access to their farmlands but also significantly reduces their willingness to cultivate large areas due to fear of violent attacks" (p. 45)

According to the study, the crisis results in an environment of constant fear and insecurity, which impacts the rural population and agriculture negatively. The farmers do not feel comfortable going to their farmland, while the traders and transporters do not travel to such places because of the danger of attack, abduction, or losing their cargo. This condition of fear significantly restricts the free movement of people, agricultural produce, and essential services. As a result, the normal functioning of agricultural markets is severely disrupted, with many local markets operating irregularly or shutting down completely in highly affected places.

4.8 DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

The analysis indicated that the farmers/herder's crisis in Benue State constitutes an immense danger to national security and mostly undermines the safety and security of food, implying that when there is a lack of food, insecurity arises. This is consistent with the findings by Oti et al. (2017) and Sulaiman and Ja'afar-Furo (2010), which stated that the conflict leads to decreased agricultural output, increased poverty in the community, insecurity, lack of adequate food provision for families, disruption of children's schooling, and health care services, with the final finding being that the conflict causes negative economic implications due to huge loss.

Though the core issues that is causing the crisis are rooted in the illegal movement of

the herdsmen with their cattle into the farms, thereby bringing disputes over resources which could cause competition, and that is the struggle for survival. Moreover, farmers often allege crop damage by herdsmen, while herdsmen attribute the theft of their cattle to farmers. The competition for resources is caused by climate change, as shifting weather patterns compel herdsmen to relocate in search of grazing areas, creating conflicts with settled farming communities over an increase in scarce resources.

However, rapid population growth and the expansion of agricultural activities have intensified pressure on land resources, deepening tensions between farmers and herdsmen. Adeleke (2018) argued that as farmers increasingly cultivate traditional grazing areas and livestock routes, competition over shrinking pasturelands and access to essential resources escalates, heightening the risk of encroachment, violent confrontation, and protracted conflict. A significant consequence of the crisis that led to the disruption of food stability is evidenced by the relationship between the stability of food supply and the displacement of people, as well as between food availability, disability, and death in Benue State. Anyabe et al. (2017) and Oti et al. (2017) both argued that food scarcity is because of the destruction of farmlands and attacks on farmers' homes, which led to the massive migration to internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. The death and destruction of farmers' lives and property have drastically affected the food supply, leading to increased importation of food. Anyabe et al. (2017) and Patience (2009) further highlighted that the crisis results in food shortages, disability, loss of life and property, and growing humanitarian crises, worsened by ineffective government mechanisms for crisis resolution.

The crisis has tragically claimed lives among both groups, leading to widespread displacement, unharvested fields, and reduced agricultural productivity, particularly in seven local governments. The fear of reprisals keeps the farmers away from the farms, making the

farms off-limits. Secondly, the constant movement of livestock, along with the geographical nature of the region, contributes to land degradation through soil erosion and loss of fertility. This decline in the quality of the land contributes to food shortages and famine leading to starvation and death of human beings as well as animals. Lastly, another crucial catalyst that perpetuates the cycle of violence is the inability of the government security mechanism to adequately tackle violent attacks, since the perpetrators remain unpunished and are emboldened in their acts. This becomes even more complicated by the development of the weapons used, which have moved from rudimentary forms to more sophisticated arms with outside aid and assistance and involvement of various groups, including those associated with Islamic terrorist organizations (Apenda, 2016). Nonetheless, the government policy put in place to address the conflict has been challenging. The National Grazing Reserve Bill of 2016 has not been accepted by many due to issues of land grab and displacement of the local farmers (Aniche & Ngwu, 2020).

Likewise, the idea of establishing cattle colonies and RUGA settlements (2019), intended to establish settlement spaces for the herdsmen, was received negatively in Benue State as a result of fears related to disruption of community life, questions regarding land ownership, and favoritism (Aniche & Ngwu, 2020; Francis et al., 2019; Gursoy, 2020). Although the National Livestock Transformation Program (NLTP) of 2018 seemed to present an integrated solution based on ranching, it still had a lot of hurdles to overcome, including funding, infrastructure development, and community participation.

4.9 IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The implications of the results in this study are significant in terms of national security, food policy, and governance in Nigeria. To start with, the research findings clearly confirm that the herdsmen issue in Benue State is not just an internal conflict, but a serious land resource issue threatening national food security in Nigeria. Also, the findings confirm various cycles where food unavailability is directly linked to rising insecurity, displacement, disability, and the death of farmers. This means that the crisis is not just a consequence of existing insecurity but a primary driver of a deepening humanitarian crisis. The widespread destruction of farmlands and abandonment of agricultural activities by fearful farmers directly translates to a reduction of national food output, undercutting Benue's state role as a food production state.

However, the large scale of displaced farmers to IDP camps and tragic human cost imply an escalating national humanitarian emergency that requires sustained, multi-sectoral intervention beyond reactive security measures. The analysis shows a failure of past and existing government policies to address the crisis effectively. The strong local initiatives like the National Grazing Reserve Bill, cattle colonies, and RUGA initiative, rooted in fears over land appropriation and land rights, show that none of these policies were effective. Any future policy, including the National Livestock Transformation (NLTP), should let people know that the land belongs to them and that modern ranching infrastructure will be established for herdsmen. The local people and farmers must agree on this plan; if not, it will not be possible to do. Most critically, the work found that the persistence of violence is linked to the failure of the security apparatus to prosecute perpetrators, implying that justice, accountability, and the end of impunity are nonnegotiable foundations for restoring peace and

deterring future conflict. The conflict, rooted in rivalry over scarce resources, worsened by climate change and population increase, suggests that there should be an integrative approach, and a sustainable one at that. The growing intrusion of herdsmen and counter-intrusion by farmers call for the revision of land management strategies that would guarantee formal rights to both parties. In terms of the environment, the areas of land degradation, soil erosion, and decreased fertility resulting from constant relocation of livestock indicate that the rehabilitation of the environment and climate-friendly farming practices are essential aspects of food security planning.

4.10 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FOUR

The results presented in this chapter clearly show the impact of the herdsmen crisis on the economic activities and food security of Benue State. It can be observed from the analysis that there is a consistent trend of destruction of farms, displacement of farmers, disruption of agriculture markets, and low productivity of food.



PICTURE 2: HERDSMEN CATTLE DESTROYING FARM CROPS.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSION

From the findings, it can be concluded that the conflict between the farmers and herdsmen in Benue State is actually a crisis of control of land resources, which is "who gets what, how and when," and it poses serious threats to food security and calls for immediate attention to prevent further national destabilization. It can be clearly proved from the results that there is a significant relationship between food availability and insecurity.

This study identified the multiple reasons behind the crisis, which include the illegality of encroachment on farmlands, increased pressures from climate change and population growth, and inadequate policies by the government. The impacts have been devastating in terms of food insecurity, displacement of population, degradation of land, and loss of lives. In answering the research questions, the study identified the causes and impacts while confirming the robust relationship between food supply security and displacement of population, and displacement of population and food availability, disability, and death of the farmers in Benue State.

Overall, based on the results, the study offers a full roadmap for the mitigation of the problems and for the future, characterized by improved food security and social cohesion. This study, therefore, concludes that policies to address the causes, with emphasis on the involvement of the community and crisis resolution, are vital for bringing peace and protecting livelihoods and contributing to food security in the agricultural sector in Nigeria's development and growth.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

To mitigate the herdsmen crisis in Benue and enhance food security in the state, it is recommended that thse recommendations be extended further to include diversification, environmental management, and accountability. In addition to changing the language and improving the distribution of lands, it is necessary that the government legally recognize and secure the customary land rights of farmers as well as herdsmen. All policies, especially those related to the use of land as well as grazing, should be legally backed up to ensure that the process is impartial and compensation is guaranteed. However, the federal government should put in place policies that would encourage the adoption of modern ranching practices by herdsmen through subsidies or credit facilities to minimize open grazing.

On this note, securing the environment entails more than mere presence; it calls for accountability and justice. There needs to be a guarantee by the authorities that individuals behind this crisis, whether from farming communities or herding communities, are held accountable in a swift manner, hence ensuring that the culture of impunity which is fueling the entire situation comes to an end. It is also necessary that law enforcement units are well-equipped and well-trained in crisis resolution and de-escalation mechanisms

However, to make such an engagement of the community constructive, it is important to structure the dialogue in such a way that encourages economic collaboration and sustainability. The government and development partners must assist in the creation of joint business ventures, common water sources, processing plants, or markets where the farmers and herdsmen will have to work together to benefit each other, thus moving from a relationship of rivalry to that of independence. In addition, it is crucial to involve the local traditional and religious leaders in the process of mediation. Furthermore, there is an underdeveloped approach to building resilience to the very stressors that cause the crisis. It is

essential that the government invests in climate agriculture for the farmers, educating them on how to grow drought-resistant crops and how to conserve the soil as a way of coping with the effects of climate change on their yields. At the same time, degraded grazing lands and water sources need to be restored using environmental protection programs. This dual strategy will lessen the strain on land and provide a sustainable escape route from the crisis through survival.

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