



Factors Responsible for (Ahmed, et al. 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v2i1.128>

Factors Responsible for the Farmers and Migrant Fulani Herdsmen Conflict in Parts of North Central Nigeria

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Abstract

Over time, there has been a mix of conflicts and cooperation between farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen. The conflict has become increasingly likely due to several historical, social and environmental factors. The study aimed at assessing the factors responsible for the farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen conflict in parts of North Central Nigeria. Data for the study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. A total of four hundred and two (402) farmers and herders from the study area were chosen with the random selection method. The analysis was done using simple percentages; mean scores, and ranking method while, results were presented in frequency distribution tables, and bar charts. The results of factors responsible for conflicts shows that fourteen (14) Likert statements have mean value above the overall mean average of 3.04, while sixteen (16) Likert statements have mean value below the overall mean average. Destruction of crops by Fulani herdsmen leads as the most ranked factor that causes conflict with a mean value of 3.33 and standard deviation of 0.29. In contrast, the last ranked statement of possible conflict factors was a proliferation of small and light weapons with a mean of 2.03 and a standard deviation of 1.00. The study recommends citizens education, from all relevant stakeholders.

Keywords: Factors, Migrant, Fulani Herdsmen, Conflict, North Central.

Introduction

Humans started as hunter-gatherers and then moved to secure more reliable food sources for survival (Alt et al., 2022). Thus, humans have lived on the natural boundaries of the land. However, these lands continually become scarce due to the growing human population. As a result, humans have resorted to domesticating plants and animals and transitioning from a primitive hunter-gatherer occupation to a more sustainable career, agriculture. Over time, there has been a mix of conflicts and cooperation between farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen. The conflict has become increasingly likely due to several historical, social and environmental factors.

Conflicts related to natural resource use are common in rural areas of Africa. Clashes between farmers and herders in Africa are often viewed as being motivated by environmental scarcity (Ahmed et al., 2021). In West Africa, farmers and herders have, over time, had an excellent association, which created a relationship of interdependence. However, clashes between them are becoming more frequent. Blockage of cattle routes and water points, encroachment of grazing land by farmers and consequent damage of crops by herders are the leading causes of conflicts between farmers and pastoralists (Ifedayo, 2023). On the other hand, the farmers blame the pastoralists for their herds destroying their farmland during grazing (Feldt et al., 2020).



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Recently, the rate of violent clashes has increased with further widespread communications, worsening the gravity of conflicts (Katsina et al., 2021). Most of these conflicts have been interpreted as religious, political, or ethnic, even though the underlying factors may be competition for resource access (Canetti et al., 2019).

This is because the land is a significant factor of production, which requires introducing a legal and institutional framework for proper management (Adenle et al. 2022). Studies have shown that land in the African context is a pooled resource but a private investment (Musavengane and Kloppers, 2020). Thus, land serves as a factor of production, a store of value or wealth, a status symbol and a source of social and political influence. Land becomes relatively scarce as more people see its importance and value.

Most of the difficulties and questions regarding conflicts are mirrored in the broader literature on African natural resource conflicts (Asare et al., 2022). The predominant causes of the conflict between the farmers and pastoralists include environmental scarcity and damaging crops (Lenshie et al., 2022). In contradiction of the milieu of environmental degradation, resource scarcity, demography change and political instability, the region perhaps demonstrates an element of conflicts among her populaces. The notion that conflicts are related to resource scarcity has drawn much attention, which must be treated cautiously. Conflict comes into play when people place competing demands on a resource, yet such circumstances do not always result in tensions or disputes (Scheidel et al., 2020).

Explicitly, numerous scholars and conflict experts have examined land and other communal-related conflicts in North Central, Nigeria (Dadashpoor and Ahani, 2019). Still, very few such studies exist in the study area as if there is no communal clash or conflict in the area. Base on the knowledge of the author, there are not any documented work on the factors responsible for the farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen conflict in Niger State, Nigeria. The study aimed at assessing the factors responsible for the farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen conflict in parts of North Central Nigeria.

Methods

The Study Area

The Niger State comprises 25 Local Government Areas with a total landmass of about 76,363 km². Niger State is believed to have the largest land area located in the North-Central part of Nigeria. It is situated between latitude 8° to 11° 30' North and Longitude 03° 30' to 07° 40' East. The State is bordered to the North by Zamfara State, West by Kebbi State, South by Kogi State, Southwest by Kwara State, North-East by Kaduna State and South-East by FCT. The State also has an international boundary with the Republic of Benin along the Agwara and Borgu LGAs to the Northwest (<https://-www.nigerstate.gov.ng/about.php>). The State consists mainly of Nupes, Gwaris, Hausas, and Kadaras.

Niger State is have two different climatic seasons (rainy and dry). The Southern part of the State has an average annual rainfall of 800-1000 mm, while the Northern region has an average rainfall of 600-900 mm, with a minimum and maximum temperature of 21°C - 38°C respectively (Abbas, 2018).

The climate of Niger State has been affected mainly by two major wind currents. The first blows from the northern country (Sahara) bring the warm, dusty and dry air mass (harmattan).



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Research Design

This study adopts the survey research design. The study use both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected on the field using questionnaires; while secondary data were source from journal publication related to the research topic. Multistage sampling techniques were used to interview farmers and herders in the three senatorial districts' targeted through randomly selection. Four hundred and two (402) farmers and herders from the study area were chosen for interview with the random selection method.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics such as: means value analysis, standard deviation and ranking statistics. The analysed data were presented in tables, charts, graphs and frequency distribution.

Results

Characteristics of the Respondent

Marital Status of the Respondents

The marital status of the respondents is presented in figure 3.1. The result indicates that the polygamous family comprised the most respondents at 48%, married monogamous with 38%, and single respondents with 8%. However, divorced or separated and widow respondents account for 4% and 2%, respectively.

Level of Education of the Respondent

The analysis of the educational level of respondents is presented in figure 3.2. The result indicates that most respondents stopped at the primary school level, accounting for 37%. This was followed by the Quranic school with 26% of the respondents. Others are a secondary school with 17% and no education with 14%; however, college or polytechnic and university level respondents accounted for 4% and 2%, respectively. The result indicates that most of the respondents had only primary school education, which shows a low educational background among the respondents.

Ethnic Group or Community of the Respondents

The analysis of the ethnic group or community of the respondent is presented in figure 3.3. The result shows that most of the respondents are indigene (local), accounting for 46% of the respondents; Fulani followed this with 30%, and indigene (State) accounted for 13%. The non-indigene made up only 11% of the respondents. This implies that most respondents are the local indigenous people of all the study areas. This also suggests that the view of this local will aid in understanding the various factors contributing to the conflicts between the farmers and Fulani herders in the study areas.

Occupation of the Respondent

The occupation of the respondents is shown in figure 3.4. The result reveals that most of the respondents are farmers, accounting for 43%, followed by livestock keeping with 35%, and fishing accounted for 14%, just as hunting/gathering accounts for 5% of the respondents. However, other occupations like business comprised 3% of the respondents. This result implies that the

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researcher was able to meet with the people whose sources of income are tied to farming and livestock rearing, which are the two major groups involved in the conflicts.

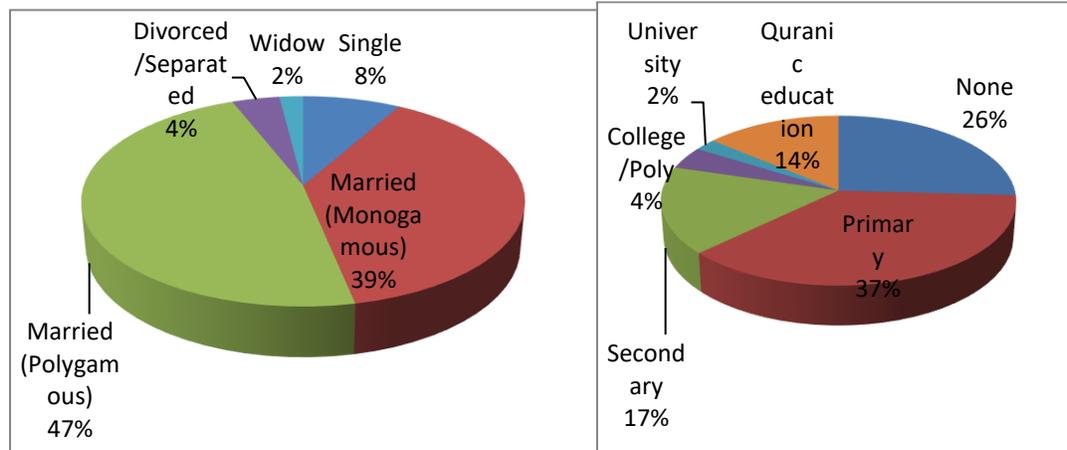


Fig 3.1 Marital Status of the Respondents **Fig 3.2 Level of Education of the Respondents**
Source: Author’s field work, (2024) Source: Author’s field work, (2024).

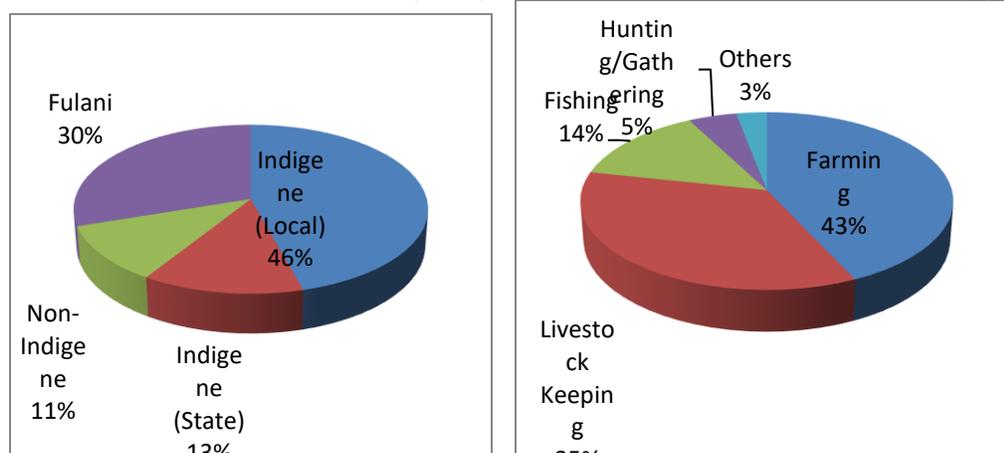


Fig 3.3 Ethnic Group or Community of the Respondents **Fig 3.4 Occupation of the Respondents**
Source: Author’s field work, (2024).

The conflicts or competition over natural resources identified in the study area

The conflicts or competition over natural resources identified in the study area are presented below.

Conflicts or competition over natural resources in the study area

The respondent testifies to conflicts because of competition over natural resources in their communities. Figure 3.5 represents conflicts or competition over natural resources in the study area. The result indicates that competition over land for farming is the most conflict experienced by the respondents, accounting for 63% of the respondents; it was followed by competition over land for pasture, accounting for 31% of the respondents. Others are competition over forest wood

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and water, accounting for 4% and 2% of the respondents, respectively. The above results agree with the work of Muhammad (2012) who reported that increased competitions over land resulted in the encroachment of farmlands into grazing reserves and cattle routes by farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen. Ahmed (2018) also submitted that cattle herders have often intentionally or unintentionally allowed their cattle to graze on croplands, destroying crops before harvest. This development has brought about conflicts between the cattle herders and crop farmers. Pastoral land scarcity pushes herders into protected areas, such as national parks and classified forests, and increases their dependence on nominally illicit practices such as tree branch lopping. Security and forestry agents responsible for enforcing these regulations are perceived as disproportionately targeting pastoralists in exacting fines and even committing violent abuses.

Conflicts or Competition over Natural Resources Experience by the Household Members Themselves in the Study Area

The conflicts or competition over natural resources experienced by the household members are represented in fig 3.6; the result reveals that disputes among the farmers and Fulani herdsmen rank first, with 44% of the respondents testifying to conflicts between farmers and migrant Fulani. Disputes between communities are ranked second, accounting for 33% of the respondents. The result further indicates that the conflict between clan and clan accounted for 11%, while conflicts among the household and youth versus community leaders were least experienced, accounting for 8% and 4% of the respondents, respectively.

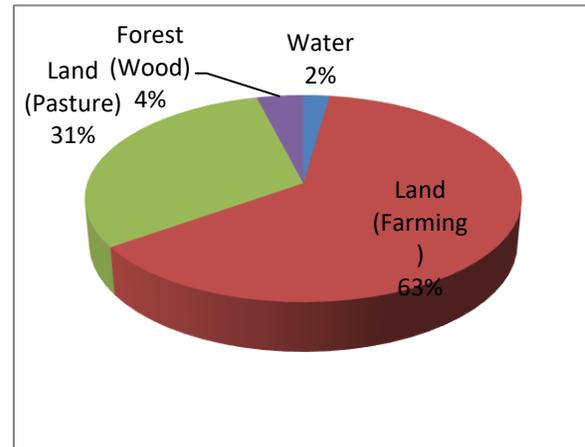
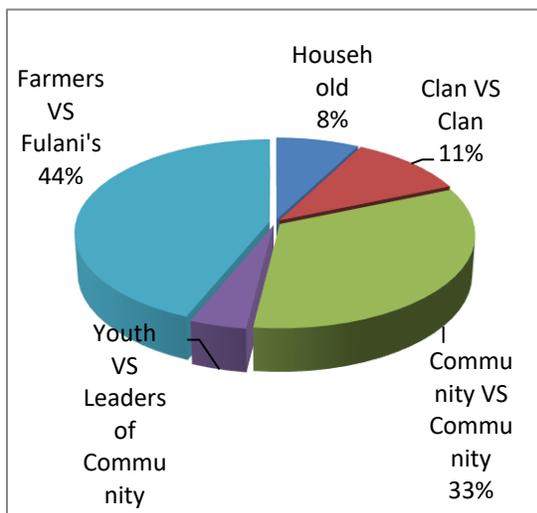


Fig 3.5 Conflicts or Competition over

Fig 3.6 Conflicts over Natural Resources

Natural Resources in the Study Area among the Communities in the Study Area

Source: Author’s field work, (2024).

The Possible Factors Responsible for Farmers and Migrant Fulani Herdsmen Conflicts to the Affected Study Area.



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The analysis of possible factors responsible for farmers' and migrant Fulani herdsmen conflicts in the affected study area is shown in Table 3.1. The research indicates that the overall mean average of all the Likert Statements analysed is 3.04, interpreted as Agree (A), meaning that all the respondents agree with the Likert statements listed in Table 3.1.

However, paying more attention to Table 3.1, you will observe that among the sixteen (16) items that have a mean value less than the overall average mean, fifteen (15) Likert statement have their mean value below 3.00, the implication of this is that the responses of these fifteen (15) items are in disagreement with their Likert statement.

Acquiring of weapons (small arms proliferation) is the only Likert statement with a standard deviation value of one (1.0), which means that the response on this statement is not answered the way they respond to the rest of the statement. The implication is that almost all the respondents are of the view that acquiring weapons (small arms proliferation) is not a possible factor for farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen conflicts in the study area.

Table 3.1: The Possible Factors Responsible for Farmers and Migrant Fulani Herdsmen Conflicts to the Affected Study Area.

Likert Statement	Number	Mean	Std Deviation	Ranking
Destruction of crops by Fulani herdsmen	402	3.33	0.29	1 st
Increase in farming activities due to increase in population	402	3.32	0.28	2 nd
Poverty	402	3.29	0.25	3 rd
Induced competition for land resources	402	3.29	0.25	4 th
Loss of lives, houses, and property	402	3.28	0.24	5 th
Cattle theft and staving of cattle	402	3.26	0.22	6 th
Contamination of streams by cattle	402	3.26	0.22	7 th
Over grazing of fallow land	402	3.25	0.21	8 th
Lack of coping mechanism by herdsmen	402	3.23	0.19	9 th
Lack of punitive measure to law defaulters	402	3.23	0.19	10 th
Sexual harassment of female by herders	402	3.21	0.17	11 th
Indiscriminate bush burning	402	3.16	0.12	12 th
Land ownership system and utilization	402	3.13	0.09	13 th
Access to land	402	3.06	0.02	14 th
Lack of adequate grazing land	402	3.02	0.02	15 th



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Inadequate rainfall	402	2.96	0.08	16 th
Harassment of nomads by host communities	402	2.95	0.09	17 th
Environmental degradation	402	2.93	0.11	18 th
Economic sabotage	402	2.91	0.13	19 th
Government insincere attitude or lack of political will	402	2.90	0.14	20 th
Armed robbery	402	2.89	0.15	21 st
Policy gap	402	2.83	0.21	22 nd
Insurgency	402	2.72	0.31	23 rd
Displacement of farmers	402	2.68	0.36	24 th
Disregard for local traditional authorities	402	2.55	0.49	25 th
Corruption	402	2.54	0.50	26 th
Drought and migration	402	2.48	0.56	27 th
Defecation of cattle on roads	402	2.38	0.66	28 th
Climate change	402	2.23	0.81	29 th
Proliferation of small and light weapons	402	2.03	1.00	30 th
Average Mean	91.17/30	3.04		

Source: Authors field work, 2023

The analysis of possible factors responsible for farmers' and migrant Fulani herdsmen conflicts in the affected study area, as shown in Table 3.1, looks at thirty (30) related statements of causes of the conflict. The result indicates that the destruction of crops by Fulani herdsmen leads to the most ranked statement that causes conflict between the farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen with a mean value of 3.33 and a standard deviation of 0.29.

This result agrees with the work of Aluko et al. (2017), who stated that the causes of farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen include the destruction of crops. The second-ranked statement is an increase in crop production due to increased population, with a mean value of 3.32 and a standard deviation of 0.28. Poverty was ranked as the third cause of conflict between farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen with a mean value of 3.29 and a standard deviation of 0.25. The fourth-ranked statement is induced competition for land resources, with a mean value of 3.29 and a standard deviation of 0.25. Loss of lives, houses, and property were ranked fifth, with a mean value of 3.28 and a standard deviation of 0.24.



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In contrast, the last ranked statement of possible conflict factors between farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen was a proliferation of small and light weapons with a mean of 2.03 and a standard deviation of 1.00.

The above-presented result indicates that almost half of the statements were agreed upon by all the respondents of directly impacting the causes of the conflict between farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen. However, about half of the respondents also disagreed with sixteen (16) statements impacting the possible factors of conflict between farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen in the study area. This result is in agreement with the work of Aluko et al. (2017), who stated that the causes of farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen conflicts include destruction of crops, contamination of streams by cattle, zero grazing of land, disregard for local traditional authorities, female harassment, harassment of nomads by host communities' youths, indiscriminate bush burning, and defecation of cattle on roads, cattle theft, and straying of cattle. Farmers increasingly compete with nomadic herders for farmland, pasture, water, trees, and range land use.

Also, the work of Fabiyi and Otunuga (2016) is in agreement with the above result as they submitted that climate change and environmental degradation have also led to farmers' and migrant Fulani herdsmen conflicts in Nigeria. They further stated that Nigeria's rivers are at the lowest levels in years, and communities are dealing with droughts. This situation worsened the conflicts between farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen because they were fighting over diminishing resources. The above result implies that the conflict between farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen in the study area is complex, multifaceted, and influenced by various factors. Some of the implications of these factors for farmers and migrant Fulani conflicts include:

Land use and access: conflicts often arise due to competition over land use and access. Farmers may perceive migrant Fulani herders as encroaching on their land and damaging crops, while Fulani herders may view the land as communal and open for grazing. This can lead to disputes over land ownership and use, resulting in violent clashes. Economic factors can contribute to conflicts between farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen. For instance, the increasing demand for beef in Nigeria has increased cattle prices, incentivising Fulani herders to move their herds further south in search of better grazing land. This has brought them into conflict with farmers trying to protect their crops.

Ethnic and religious tensions: conflicts between farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen are often characterized by ethnic and religious tensions, with each group perceiving the other as a threat to their identity and way of life. This can lead to violence and perpetuate cycles of retaliation and revenge. **Weak governance and security:** the lack of effective law enforcement and conflict resolution mechanisms can lead to impunity for perpetrators of violence. It can create a sense of insecurity among both farmers and herders. Climate change also contributes a little to the conflict between farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen as rainfall patterns change and drought sets in some parts of the study area. This has affected farmers and migrant Fulani herdsmen; they are forced to migrate for water and grazing land. By so doing, they usually clash in the process, leading to conflict with settled farmers. The study recommends citizens education, from all relevant stakeholders.

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