

## HERDERS-FARMERS CONFLICT, STATE GOVERNMENT'S INTERVENTION AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT FROM OGBESE COMMUNITY IN AKURE NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ONDO STATE

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### Abstract

*This study investigated herders-farmers conflict, state Government's intervention, and conflict management in Nigeria. The issues examined include: the causal factors responsible for the herders-farmers conflict; the conflict effects on social economic; various form of intervention programmes that state government embarked on reducing herders-farmers conflict and the level of awareness, extent of the acceptability, efficacy and the inevitable consequences of the intervention programmes. The study used the survey-descriptive research design while four-point scale likert-type questionnaire was employed as the research instrument to elicit responses from one hundred responses selected using convenience and voluntary response sampling method. The data was analyzed using SPSS Software Version 26. The findings from the study revealed that scarcity of natural resources such as grazing land and water; destruction of crops and farmland caused by the herders during grazing are the major internal factors that caused herders-farmers conflict and the conflict as well has negative effects on socio-economic. The establishment of Amotekun Corps and enacted of anti-open grazing law as parts of the programmes established by the government in reducing the herders-farmers conflict received full awareness and acceptability by all and sundry. The efficacy of these programmes has no doubt significantly reduced the conflict, though; the inevitable consequences remain the huge cost implication of the establishment of Amotekun corps and criticisms from oppositions. The study therefore recommends that Northern State Government should encourage and establish ranching system, trainings, and provide fund and loan at very low interest to herders to enhance cattle business since cattle rearing is their major occupation, which in return will reduce the herders' migration southward. While in the western part of Nigeria, modern way of rearing cattle – ranching should be made mandatory for the indigenous herders to embrace with the support of the state government as being practiced in other civilized country. In addition, Western Nigeria Security Network codenamed Operation Amotekun should strategize another means to complement the efforts of her state security network – Amotekun Corps to combat the security challenges facing the region.*

**Keywords:** Herders-farmers conflict, Conflict Management, State Government Intervention, Ogbese Community, Nigeria.

### 1.0 Introduction

Nigeria is one of the nation states in Africa that has been affected by experiencing insecurity across its 36 States (Adejumo, 2021). Prior to the emergence of herders-farmers conflict, assassination, kidnapping, robbery, violence arising from political, ethnic, religious and

domestic violence have been the issues associated with insecurity. But currently, the emergences of herders-farmers conflict, coupled with assassination, kidnapping, robbery, banditry among others, have turned some of the States and territories unsafe. According to Ilo, Jonathan-Ichaver, & Adamolekun (2019), the conflict between herders and farmers has increased with a record of over 9,000 premature death and displacement of hundreds of thousands of people within the country. In the same vein, violence between herders and farmers in Nigeria is at a high rate in the Northwestern, Middle Belt, and recently in the Southern States (Leif, 2021). Atobatele & Moliki (2022); Akorede (2018); Akinrinade (2021) revealed that the conflict between herders and farmers have become unendurable in most states within the country. Currently, herders-farmers conflicts have become a serious threat to the socio-economic development and overall security of Nigeria.

The causes of this conflict are not far-fetched. International Conflicts Group (2017) indicated that since pastoralists could no longer have access to grazing reserves due to the spread of human settlements, social infrastructure, large-scale agricultural land use, and the establishment of additional enterprises, they were forced to compete for land and other resources, which as a result leads to conflict between herders and farmers. Similarly, Ilo, et. al. (2019); Lenshie, Okengwu, Ogbonma & Ezeibe (2020); Mercy Corp, Abuja (2015); Omilusi (2016) discover that Climate change, environmental degradation, population growth, scarcity of natural resources like grazing land and water, technological advancements, damage to farmland and crops, attacks on cattle and cattle rustling or theft, inter-communal relationships, destruction of agricultural and livestock outputs, and others are some of the external and internal factors that contributed to the ongoing bloody clashes between the herders and farmers. Another reason that leads to herders-farmers conflict as revealed by Hembe (2005), Ukamaka et al., (2017) is herders' claim of equal ownership and tenure rights because they were frequently granted temporary settlement privileges. Therefore conflict has occurred through the abuse of conventional host and stranger relationships.

In the light of knowing the potential root causes of the conflicts, Blomfield (2018) puts a clarion call to the Federal Government and other stakeholders to proffer solutions to crises between the herders and the farmers in various communities within the States in Nigeria. As a way of nipping the conflicts in the bud, Federal Government has taken several policy decisions such as creation of grazing reserves, establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education, deployment of security agencies, the Great Green Wall Initiative, the Federal Government's Comprehensive Livestock Development Plan, Radio Frequency Identification Device and Community-Based Conflict Management and Cooperative Use of Resources (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018). According to Humanus, Wahyala & Changwak (2022), under the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP), the Federal Government launched a number of policy proposals in an effort to lessen the severe herders-farmers conflict, which includes the cattle colony, the Rural Grazing Area (RUGA), the reclamation of abandoned grazing routes, and reserves

Though, it appears that all the proposed programmes from the Federal Government to resolve the bloody conflict between the two parties could not be implemented by the concerned stakeholders due to some challenges. For instance, the Land Use Act of 1978 gives State Governors control over all lands (Humanus, et.al, 2022). Hence, the land tenure system led to

fragmentation and inadequate opportunity to develop sustainable policy for grazing reserves (Akinrinade, 2021). This causes some of the State Governors as the Chief Security Officers of their states to employ actions and policies within their jurisdiction to address the issue of insecurity in their respective states. Obioha (2021) highlighted that the State government of Benue, Taraba, Ebonyi, Abia, Bayelsa, Rivers, Oyo, Ekiti, Ondo, Enugu, Osun, Akwa-Ibom and Lagos State who believe that the establishment of the proposed National Open Grazing Reserve by the Federal Government would further expose them to armed herders, criminals, bandits leading to high rate of insecurity in their states have decided to pass the anti-open grazing into law. Although, other Southern governments, such as the Edo, Ogun and Anambra were in the process of passing the Anti-Open Grazing Bill into law while the Imo State government declines cooperation but rather seeks partnership with the pastoralists, (Obioha, 2021).

### **Herders-farmers conflict as Threat to Security in Ondo State**

Ondo State is one of the 36 States of the Federation of Nigeria, created in February 1976 with the state capital Akure. It is made up of 18 Local Government Area and located in the South Western Zone of Nigeria (MEPB, Ondo State, 2018). The state enjoys flourishing vegetation and forest with adequate rain. Its population of elite educated individuals has contributed to its classification as one of Nigeria's most educationally developed states. The majority of the population depends on subsistence farming, fishing, and trading (MEPB, Ondo State, 2018).

Ondo State has had its own share of herders-farmers conflict and its attendant consequence to security. The crimes committed by the Fulani herders and other criminals in Southwest Nigeria led to the establishment of the Western Nigerian Security Network coded – Amotekun. Adejumo (2021) reported that insecurity is the major menace facing the country, especially in the Western region of Nigeria, where had been re-occurring cases of killings and kidnappings for ransom both on the highways and farmlands by the alleged Fulani herders as the most perpetrators. The ordeal of the abduction of prominent Nigerians such as Chief Olu Falae, a former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Mrs Olufunke Olakurin, the daughter of Afenifere Leader, Pa Rueben Fasoranti killed by Fulani herders, in Ondo State (Dada. 2022). These criminal acts prompted the action of the Six Southwest state governments to put heads together and resolved the establishment of Amotekun Operatives in the six states. Before the abductor of Olu Falae, several prominent civilians had been kidnapped such as Yinka Adegbehinde, a Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, two Federal Road Safety Corps officials, Musibau Adetunbi, an Ibadan-based legal practitioner, and some narrowly escaped victims such David Olajide, a traditional ruler of Osi Town and the Governor of Ondo State, Mr. Rotimi Akeredolu to mention few (Punch, 2019). Presently, the number of people kidnapped, raped, and killed has lost count, and many attacks have gone unreported.

In addition to kidnapping and robbery, Akintunde (2020) claimed that disputes between herders and farmers pose the biggest dangers to security in Ondo State. These conflicts have led to the deaths of farmers in the state as well as the damage of farmland and crops. Farmers and their families have lost a number of lives as a result of herders feeding their cattle on their farms on an increasingly frequent basis. Between the herders, farmers, and their communities, unrestricted grazing of cattle has resulted in premature death (Udegbonam, 2021). According

to media reports, the conflict between farmers and herders appeared to be one of the societal issues that present a severe security risk, especially in the Southwestern States. According to Ogunbiyi (2018), bloodthirsty herdsman do appear to be on the hunt in Ondo State and some other states. Moreover, Ogunbiyi (2018) explained that since the herder-farmer issue first arose, things have gotten sour between the two parties involved. It is only when there is reasonable safety of lives and property could everyone in the Southwestern States benefit from the unity of the region and its means of peaceful coexistence of the sub-regions and their means of livelihood, maintenance, and sustainability (Brimah et al. 2020).

The present trend of creating geo-regional security organizations for collective security was a result of states' inadequate security agencies. Atobatele & Moliye, (2022) in their study discovered that the crises have a detrimental effect on sustainable development caused by government insensitivity to the situation of both farmers and herders. Similar to this, Akintola (2021) emphasized that a farmer in Ondo State was attacked after he denied herders access to their farmland. And as a result of this incident, the state administration of Ondo State gave the herders a seven-day deadline to leave the state's forest reserves. Other regions of Nigeria have expressed interest in creating similar security a, while the Southwest has already established the Western Nigeria Security Network – Amotekun Corps.

As the herder-farmer dispute has grown more deadly due to State's rejection of the open grazing proposal by the Federal Government, the South-West Governors resolved to combat insecurity using all available legal methods. As a result, the Ondo State Government issued a directive ordering the eviction of herders from its forest reserves while outlawing indiscriminate grazing throughout the state. He, also, requested that all herders should register with the state in order to practice their trade – pastoralism. Although the notification caused a lot of controversy, the Federal Government mistook it for an order against the Fulani and labeled the conduct as unlawful. Ondo State Government defended the legality of its directive notwithstanding the objections (Ogun, 2021, Adeyemo, 2022).

Amotekun Corps, a State Security Network Agency and a branch of Western Nigeria Security Network, was established to combat all criminal activities in the states in the interest of the general welfare of its citizens as a result of the State Government's increased efforts to improve state security.

The previous research studies (Lenshie et al. 2020; International Conflicts Group (ICG), 2017; Townsend, 2009; Adogi 2013; Homer-Dixon, 1999; Chigozie, C. 2012; Omilusi 2016) showed that the migration of Fulani herders from Northern Nigeria and other Africa countries to the South-western and other regions in Nigeria was due to desertification, climate change, increase in population, industrialization and scarcity of resource such as grazing land, water amongst others. Likewise, it was also established that there had been peaceful and mutual understanding between herders and their host communities – farmers in the South West, Nigeria (Brimah & Shittu, 2020). The Fulani herders and their host communities had successfully carried out their daily activities such as farming, cattle grazing and other businesses without serious conflict, even when it arises, these are usually resolved amicably without resulting into crises (Dada, 2021). This is contrary to the present challenges of incessant clashes between the Fulani herders and the local farmers. The Fulani herders who

migrated from Northern Nigeria and other part of Africa have been alleged of encroaching on farmlands for grazing their cattle, which often led to the damage of crops, plants and farmlands. The effects of herders-farmers conflict have led to low productivity of farm produce which has great adverse effect on socio-economic activities. Quite a number of farmers have been displaced for the fear of being killed by Fulani herders ([Akintunde, 2020](#)). This appears to be the reasons why there are incessant clashes and conflicts between the indigenous local farmers and the Fulani herders. In the South West, Nigeria, the incessant clashes have constituted major security and socio-economic challenges.

According to Johnson (2021), the habit of herders grazing their cattle illegally on cultivated farmlands started at Ipe-Akoko, Ondo North, Ondo State precisely in 2016 when a farmer received a worrisome call that cattle led by herders had destroyed his ten hectares of oil palm field. Since then these herders have formed a habit of grazing on farmland and which has led to several and continuous conflicts between the herders and the farmers. As buttressed by Njoku, Agbedo, Ogugbuaja & Idris (2021), farmers are constantly being the victims of these violent and armed herders. Recently a female rice farmer in Ogbese Community in Akure North Local Government was attacked in her rice farm by Fulani herdsman (SUN News, 2021, April 2). Johnson (2021) added that the farmers across the three senatorial districts in Ondo State narrated their ordeal that they had constantly been victims of herders since 2016.

Nwangwu et al. (as cited in Lenshie et al. 2020 p. 14) 'The effects in most of the states have been cattle rustling and conflicts, in which the Fulani herders are the aggressors and the indigenous farmers mostly remain the victims of these attacks'. Previous studies have accounted for the causes of immigration of herders to the Southwest and the related consequences to security in the region, especially in Ondo State; the vacuum left behind is the failure to investigate into how individual States are managing the herders-farmers conflicts within their territories. Hence, further research is required to examine Ondo State vis-à-vis the nature of herders-farmers conflict and government intervention in managing and resolving the conflict. Therefore, this study will examine the causal factors and the effects of herders-farmers conflict and establish the influence of recent government intervention in managing and resolving the herders-farmers conflict and the level of the acceptability of government intervention programme by the farmers who are the main victims of the herders-farmers conflict in Ondo State. The findings of this study will contribute to the extant literature on herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria and will also benefit the Federal Government, State Governments, Local Governments, corporate organizations and other stakeholders in the nearest future.

It is against this background, that this study seeks to examine the perceived effectiveness of the state government's intervention in reducing herders-farmers conflict in Ondo State using Ogbese, Akure North Local Government, Ondo State. Therefore, the specific objectives that this study seeks to examine include to determine the causal factors of herder-farmer; investigate the effects of herders-farmers conflict on socio-economic activities; find out the various forms and the extent of awareness of the intervention programmes that the state government has embarked on; find out the acceptability of government's intervention; ascertain the efficacy of the various state government's intervention programmes; and lastly, examine the inevitable consequences of the state government's intervention in reducing

herders-farmers conflict in Ogbese Community. The study focused on the activities of herders and farmers in Ogbese Community, being the study area. The village was chosen because it is one of the major areas where herders-farmers conflict has been ongoing in recent years, and because it is the food basket of the state with far-reaching implications for food security of the state if the village is not at peace with itself. The population of the study comprises the farmers in Ogbese Community.

## **Literature Review**

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Herders-farmers conflict**

The struggle between herders (nomadic and Semi-nomadic Fulani pastoralists and farmers over the limited natural resources leading to conflict that jeopardizes the lives and properties of the citizens in Nigeria.

#### **Conflict Management**

Schmid (2000) described conflict management as interference in an ongoing conflict proves in such a way as to curtail and if possible, reduce the level of violence and destruction. According to Fisher et al, conflict management is purported to limit and prevent future violence by encouraging positive behavioural changes in the conflicting parties. Conflict management in this study is not far-fetched from the above definition. However, it is a remedial intervention by a neutral party aiming to control and reduce a conflict between two or more parties involving in a conflict to prevent violence

#### **State Government Intervention**

State Government, the chief security of its state and bond to protect the lives and properties of its citizen, has stood up as a third party to strategy on the modalities to manage the crisis between herders and farmers within the state by addressing the underlying causes of the conflict.

#### **Nature of the Herders-farmers conflict**

Since the attack started, the conflict between the herders and the farmers has taken on a new dimension. Herders frequently destroy farm crops and graze on farmland in retaliation for cattle attacks, and vice versa (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018; Torimiro, Adebo, Kolawole, Taiwo, Owoeye, & Ayodele, 2020); Atobatele & Moliki, 2022). Other criminal actions, such as water poisoning, vegetation destruction, house burning, rape, kidnapping, and other crimes, were not left out. The most concerning aspect of the current situation is the robbery, rape, injury, death, and kidnapping committed by the suspected Fulani herdsmen.

Reports about herders purposefully killing farmers and chasing some out of their houses with Ak-47 guns have been printed and confirmed in national publications on a daily basis. (Ajibefun, 2018).Nnanna, (2016);Nwozor, Olanrewaju, Oshewolo, Oladoyin, Adedire, & Okidu (2021) and Wodu, (2022) concluded that over time, the nature of herder-farmer confrontations has changed, becoming more frequent and more violent. With AK-47 and other weapons in hand, the hired herders moved cattle all over the country and attacked any farmers who confronted or queried their grazing on farmlands (Odufowokan, 2014; Apenda, 2016). Fulani herders access to military weapons and government overt and covert backing

has been the driving forces behind all the attacks. And this has made the country's politics even more divided, which has a knock-on effect on national security. These changes have given various states in the nation the impetus to pursue self-help measures (Ajala, 2019, Nwozor et al, 2021, Akorede, 2018). Even, though, the Chairman of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeder Association in Plateau State in 2016 stated that the herders were in possession of sophisticated weapons as self-defense due to cattle rustling and killing of his men who were grazing their cattle (The Punch, May 8, 2016). Responding, Adegboyega (2016) in his study, states that carrying and using AK 47 and other arms to kill, and instill fear into their opposition in the name of self-defense is like a jungle justice, which should be frowned upon.

### **Causes of Herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria**

Sequel to a study by the International Conflicts Group with the Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria in 2016, it was recorded that the majority of the 415 grazing reserves established by the Northern Regional Government in the 1960s have reportedly been lost, and only 114 have been formally released for its purposes. Relationships have been strained as farming and pastoralism methods have changed. Some herders have steadily adopted sedentary lifestyles over the past three decades, leaving cattle herding to young boys between the ages of 9 to 25 who lack the manners and maturity to settle disagreements amicably (International Conflicts Group, 2017). Desertification is linked to the escalating herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria, and this desertification has forced Fulani herders to migrate to the savannah region of Nigeria in order to survive. The state's inability to maintain an efficient security system in Nigeria encourages unchecked herder migration, intensifies rivalry for land resources, and exacerbates the issue of herders-farmers conflict (Lenshie et al. 2020; Bagu & Smith, 2016; Amnesty International, 2018). The authors came to the conclusion that the main causes of unchecked migration and violence between herders and farmers in Nigeria were the state's incapacity to regulate the impacts of desertification and create an efficient security system, particularly in northern Nigeria. Violence is more likely to break out in situations involving the usage of land and water, disruption of traditional grazing routes, cattle theft, and crop damage. Similar to how pastures and water sources have been impacted by drought and desertification throughout Nigeria's far-northern Sahelian area, a huge number of herders have been compelled to travel south in quest of natural resources (International Conflicts Group (ICG), 2017); Blomfield (2018); Tonah (2000); (CNN News, 2016, May 5).

Townsend (2009) asserts that changes in society, the environment, the growth of industry, the loss of arable land due to drought, cultivation, habitation, and other economic activities have all had an impact on the pastoralist's mobility. According to Adogi (2013), ICG, (2017), as the population grows, there will be a rise in the demand for land, water, forest products, and grazing pasture in the regions home to Fulani herders and farmers, forcing these groups to find a way to live and then relocate to another area. Less rainfall falls in Nigeria's far north, which is a dry and semiarid region, than in other parts of the nation. Hence, herders stay longer in the central zone from December to July while some of them have decided to graze permanently in the Central and South zone, Nigeria.

However, the National Meteorological Agency (NMA) revealed in 2008 that over the previous 30 years, the length of the annual rainy season has decreased from an average of 150 to 120 days. The research also stated that, over the previous six decades, more than 350,000 km<sup>2</sup> of

the nearly arid region had been progressively transforming into a desert, a phenomena that was found to be moving Southward at a rate of 0.6 km per year. In addition, the International Conflicts Group Report (ICG, 2017) shows that states like Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi, Jigawa, Borno, Sokoto, Gombe, Katsina, Yobe, Kebbi, and Zamfara were gradually turning into deserts as 50–75 percent of the land area dried up. In addition, a pastoral system deployed by the Fulani pastoralist requires grazing from the far North towards the southern part of the country during the drying seasons in the quest for water and pastures (Ayu & Dura, 2014). According to Ayu & Dura (2014), it is pretty evident that the change in environmental factors has considerably influenced the migration of herders toward the Southwest in pursuit of greener pastures.

Another explanation put forth differently by some scholars for the ongoing attacks by the herders on farmers is that the attacks are allegedly intended to convert any attacked community, particularly those in the Middle Belt and the oil-rich South, to Islam as a continuation of Dan Fodio's jihad (cited in Umoh, 2017 p.19). Also, The Institute of Economics & Peace, (2015) and Blench, (2017) asserted that the Fulani herders' goal in encroaching on farmlands is to acquire control of land in every community to ensure their sustainability. Similarly, It is fast becoming unequivocal that the threat of ethnic strife in Nigeria is real and it will be deluding, and dangerously so, to continue to discount this veritable risk. It does not help that even elder statesmen known for their pro-Nigeria stance are accusing the government of a Fulanisation and /or Islamisation agenda (Tribune, 2019).

#### **Causes of herders-farmers conflict in Ondo State**

Ondo State is one of the six South-western states in Nigeria and one of the 36 states of the Federation of Nigeria, created in February 1976 with state capital Akure. It is made of 18 Local Government Area and located in the South Western Zone of Nigeria. The State lies between longitudes 4°30" and 6° East of the Greenwich Meridian 5°45" and 8°15" North of the Equator, with a land area: 14,788.723 square kilometers. The state enjoys generally, luxuriant vegetations and high forest zone (rain forest). The high number of elites in the state has led to its being classified as one of the most educationally advanced states in Nigeria. The people are subsistence farmers, fishermen and traders (MEPB, Ondo State, 2018).

Ondo State is one of the peaceful states not devoid of crimes or criminal activities but crimes were very minimal, until in the recent time when some suspected herders attacking the farmers on their farms and destroying the farmers farmland (Genyi, 2014; Nzeh, 2015; Mwamfupe, 2015; Goke, 2018; Blench, 2010; Akingboye, 2021). As I early indicated in the literature review, herders and farmers used to maintain cordial relationships. Sekiri Balogun, Ondo State (2022) revealed that the perpetrator herders are strangers, not the herders who have lived, grown and even exchanged marriage with the indigenous people within the state that were causing the havoc (Interview, 2022). Also, Malam Nasir el-Rufai in 2016 confirmed that herders attacking rural communities in the state were not Nigerians (Vanguard, Jan. 27, 2018).

Adebajo & Olusola (2022) revealed that the reserved forests in Ondo State which the herders used as their hideout to carry out attacks against the farmers and communities had revived the existence of the suspected herders and therefore, lead to one of the causes of herders-



farmers conflict. Dike (2021) established in his study that open grazing of cattle is a threat to farming and causing the crisis between herders and farmers, and herders' access to arms had given them the effrontery to graze and destroy farmlands. Herders' victims and farmers in Ogbese community revealed that the contemporary herders had caused a lot of damages in their communities; they were always armed and have no fear in entry farmlands, feed their cattle with the crops, and even help uproot the crops to feed the cattle. Questioning or querying the herders would always cause attack on the farmers (Interview, 2022). During an interview with some of the farmers in Ogbese Community, the researcher gathered that the major causal factor of herders-farmers conflict was the activities of the herders by grazing their cattle on their cultivated crops and plants and destroyed the entire farmland which they had laboured and even got a loan to cultivate. It is believed that the herders action were deliberate. They claimed that the activities of the herders had led to loss of lives and properties, injury of victims, shortage of farm products or produce, displacement of people, high cost of food, loss of employment by the unskilled labourers, fear and panicking, low income, and loss of interest in farming. According to Adebajo & Olusola (2022) the negative effect of herders-farmers conflict include loss of lives and properties, food insecurities, socio-economic disorder and mistrust among ethnic groups.

### **Ondo State Government's Intervention Strategic Programmes in Reducing and Managing Herders-farmers conflict**

Herders-farmers conflict in the recent time has been a threat to human life especially the farmers and their communities in Nigeria. The conflict has escalated and became more deadly than expected. Claiming lives, properties, human displacement, and adversely effected the social-economic of the nation. Efforts of the Federal Governments resolving this crisis proved abortive, hence, the South-west government which comprises six states met and decide to put some measures in place in order to reduce the conflict. Asides from the joint efforts of the south-west governments, Ondo State Government has unassisted put additional measures in place to reduce the deadly activities of the herders since they remain the marauders and the farmers remain the victims. As measures adopted for conflict management, the following steps were taken:

#### **i. Formulation of Anti-open Grazing Law**

Herder- farmer conflict is caused by a competition over agricultural resources such as fresh water, crop land and grazing land. In order to ensure that farmers are saved from losing their farm crops and lives as a result of open grazing practice and prevent the incessant and violent conflicts arising from open grazing, Ondo State Government has taken several strategic steps. In August 31, 2021, the Ondo State House of Assembly passed into law, a bill to regulate security, rearing and grazing of livestock and establishment of ranches (Johnson, 2021; Oyeleke, 2021). And the Anti-open grazing law has been enforced since and has helped so far in minimized the herders-farmers conflict within the state.

The objectives of the Anti-Open Grazing Law are: to prevent destruction of farm crops and community pond, settlement and property by the open grazing of livestock; to prevent clash between herders and farmers; to regulate and support the growth of livestock farming and manage the environmental impact of open livestock grazing; to prevent, control and manage the spread of diseases as well as ease the implementation of policy that will enhance the

production of a high and healthy breed of livestock both for the local and export market; and to promote the modern techniques of animal husbandry, particularly the rearing of livestock (Ondo State Anti-Open Grazing Law, 2021).

#### **ii. Government's Order to Herder to Vacate the Forest Reserves**

In order to reduce the repeated clashes between herders and farmers in Ondo State, on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021, the State Government, Governor Oluwarotimi Akeredolu issued a seven-day ultimatum to the herders to vacate the forest reserves in Ondo State and mandated every cattle owner and herder to register as a trader in the State. Gbademosi (2021) stated that crop production or animal husbandry are types of farming system, therefore, any citizen who desires land for farming in government forest reserves must duly register with the Ministry of Agriculture. The Land Use Act contains the Trade Cattle Tax Law of Ondo State promulgated in 1969 as contained in Chapter 153, Vol. 4 Laws of Ondo State of Nigeria, 2006. The Section 2 of the law stated movement permit, which is defined as a movement permit issued in the state under the Control Trade Cattle Regulations or a permit relating to the movement of trade cattle issued by any authority having power to issue the same under any law in force in any other part of Nigeria." "Section 5 of the law again recognizes the legitimacy of issuing trade cattle movement permit along 'recognizable trade cattle route', while Section 4 thereof provides for the establishment of a cattle control post or inspection station, as the case may be, for the purposes of the Law'. Therefore, it is illegal for any herder to encroach Ondo State government forest reserve without a permit and graze on the farmers farms.

Following the executive order given by the Ondo State Governor, the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) conceded to the order by vacating the forest reserve and registered their members with the Ministry of Agriculture as a herder and trader (Johnson, 2021).

This development has helped to an extent to detect or identify strangers among them and the owner of cattle that entered any farmland because every registered cattle breeders has a means of identification on the cattle foot.

#### **iii. South-West Governors Meeting with the National Leaders of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN)**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2021, the Six State Governor of the Southwest Region, Nigeria meet with the Leader of the Fulani Herdsmen, Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) in Akure after the Ondo State Governor, gave the order of an seven-day ultimatum for the herders to vacate the Forest Reserves in the state. The meeting was aimed at checking the insecurity resulting from a series of herders-farmers conflict in relation to killings and kidnappings in the six South-west states. The outcome of the meeting was the prohibition of night grazing, underage herding and occupance of state forest reserves (Akingboye, 2021). In addition, it was agreed that a herder-farmer Committee would be put in place to work out the modality to end insecurity in the six states (Adejumobi, 2021). The meeting of the Southwest Governors with the MACBAN was successful and accomplished its purpose.

#### **iv Ondo State Government Support to the Nigerian Police Force**

Ondo State Governor, Oluwarotimi Akeredolu built and donated a story building to the Nigeria Police within Zone 17 Headquarter of the Nigeria Police Force as government support for the protection of lives and properties (Akintunde, 2020). In addition, the Ondo State government collaborated with the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) in the formation of a joint security operation to solve the insecurity in the state (Gbademosi, 2019).

#### **iv. Amotekun Corps and its Operations in Ondo State**

Ondo State Security Network Agency - Amotekun Corps was established on January 9, 2020 by the six state governors of all the Southwestern States, namely, Ondo, Ekiti, Oyo, Ogun, Lagos and Osun State (Uromayino, 2020, Jan. 10).

Amotekun Corps was inaugurated on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2020 by the Ondo State Government, Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Akeredolu. It is a lawful security outfit that backed by the laws of the six states in the Southwestern which is designed to support the existing security framework in the state to ensure the security of life and property in the state. The Corps operate within Ondo State territory. The formation of the security outfit was informed by the incessant and series of reports on attacked and unlawful killing of farmers and kidnappings of innocent citizens in Southwestern Nigeria (Bankole, 2021). Similarly, Adejumo (2021) reported that insecurity is the major menaces facing the country especially in South-west states was the re-occurring cases of killings and kidnappings for ransom both on the highways and farmlands by the suspected Fulani herders as the perpetrators. The ordeal of the abduction of the prominent Nigerians such as Falae, a former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Olufunke Olakurin killed by herders in Ondo State. These criminal acts has prompted the action of the Six South-west state governments to put heads together and resolved on the creation of Amotekun Corps in the six states.

In reviewing the literature on herders-farmers conflict, the researcher noted that most research has mainly focused on its causal factors, and socio-economic consequences but there is a lack of robust research on how individual state government has been able to manage the conflict within their jurisdiction. Therefore, this is a gap that the study will address.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

In this study, the Eco-Violence and Ethnic Identity Theory are combined to explain the conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria.

#### **Eco-Violence Theory**

The study of eco-violence examines the connection between environmental shortages of important renewable resources such as cropland, fresh water, and forests and violent insurrections, unrests, and inter-ethnic conflict in emerging nations. Land, water, crops, and freshwater fish demand and supplies are the critical resources for which individuals or groups compete, and their shortage is a result of environmental scarcity that usually lead to migration, which frequently results in ethnic conflicts brought on by poverty, as people move from one place to another (Homer-Dixon,1999). The three causes of environmental scarcity, according to Homer-Dixon are supply-instigated scarcity, demand-instigated scarcity, and structural scarcity. Resources depletion causes supply-instigated scarcity; population growth

and excessive consumption result in demand-instigated scarcity; and, ultimately, unequal resource distribution results in structural scarcity (Homer-Dixon 1999).

The term "eco-violence" has been used to describe the violent conflict in the Sahel region brought on by the lack of renewable resources like water and agricultural land, most notably the prolonged violent clashes between herders and farmers in Nigeria (Ogu, 2020). According to Olumba, Nwosu, Okpaleke & Okoli, (2022), Eco-violence refers to conflicts where social groups or state actors compete for water and agricultural resources, frequently leading to mass killings and the destruction of the environment and properties. Such conflicts are made worse by the state's (or states') failure to address issues with resource redistribution, institutional shortcomings, and environmental and social injustice. Homer-Dixon and Blitt argue that environmental scarcity will get worse in many developing nations over the next few decades and play a bigger role in severe civil violence.

Agricultural resources such as insufficient of arable land, fresh water, unfavourable climate, a shortage of rainfall and grazing land option have all contributed to the herders-farmers conflict. This theory is best supported by the current scenario in Nigeria. Conflict leading to loss of lives and properties in Nigeria arose as result of restricting the Fulani herders (who have been experiencing shortfall of rainfall, grazing land and climate change in the North) from grazing their cattle on farmlands outside their geographical zone.

### ***Ethnic Identity Theory***

According to Connor (1994) ethnic identity conflict is peculiar with the difference of basic identity which manifests itself in 'us' – 'them' or 'we' – 'they' syndrome. This is one of the features that make the conflict so complex and enduring. This complexity is highlighted as a severe hindrance to conflict resolution. This is of importance in explaining herders-farmers conflict because the same concept is applicable to religious conflict whether one defines the conflict between herders and farmers in Nigeria as ethnic (Fulani Vs Yoruba) or as religious (Muslim vs Christian), it makes little theoretical difference as the conception for ethnic and religious conflict operate in the same manner. What is important is that these groups (herders and farmers) have categorized themselves as separate groups and they view each other as the out-group or enemy. Egbedi (2016) stated that many people have begun to question whether the herders' justification for migrating in search of land and other resources was indeed genuine due to the herders' continued attacks and escalating levels of atrocity or damage done in their various settlements as strangers.

Ethnic Identity Theory is useful in explaining conflict behaviour of herders-farmers conflict in Ogbese Community. It illustrates the depth of complexity of emotions that are at work in the community. One of the key objectives of ethnic conflict is to seek control of the state itself (Horowitz, 1985). This connotes that groups seek control of the state in order to ensure that their needs are met at the detriment of opposing groups. This applies to the issue of herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria, where the issue of herders-farmers conflict becomes a focus of ethno-national conflict, politico-economic and transcontinental dimension (Ajala, 2019; Ojo, 2020; Nwozor et al. 2021).

As earlier indicated, the migration of herders from the West Central Africa and Northern zone of the country to the Southern zone was as a result of desertification, and climate change amongst others. But this is not a new development, for this had been in existence for decades. The herders graze towards the South-West during the dry season and there had been peaceful co-existence until the recent time. The Fulani herders and families were always joyfully welcomed into their host communities because there used to be mutual benefits and peaceful relationship between the farmers and the Fulani herders (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005; Moritz, 2010; McGregor, 2014; Genyi, 2014; Nzeh, 2015). Until recent times, when the relationship deteriorated and becomes worse due to constant conflict between the two parties, (Chigozie, 2012; Mwamfupe, 2015; Goke, 2018; Blench, 2010). . The question is why is the herders who are the Fulani appear to be favoured while farmers who are from other ethnicity remain the victims of the conflict

### **Eco-violence and Ethnic Identity Theory Synergy**

The combination of Eco-violence and Ethnic Identity Theories have a better chance in explaining herders-farmers conflict in the sense that the effects of desertification, climate change, scarcity of grazing land and other national resource in the Northern part of Nigeria have stimulated the migration of Fulani herders towards the southern part of the country where arable land with luxurious vegetation and high rainfall for grazing are available. Meanwhile, the arable land available in the southern part has been cultivated by the indigenous farmers who are the owners of the land or owned by their ancestors. There arrives conflict of interest between the herders who are strangers on someone else's land and the landowner or land hirer. Therefore, conflict arises because the farmers who owns a land, having cultivated and laboured to plant crops and vegetable would not allow a desperate herder who are in the dare need of arable land to graze his cattle on the farmland.

However, the ethnicity identity sets in as the two conflicting parties (herder and farmer) do not belong to the same identity group. Herders are mostly Fulani and Muslin by religion while the farmers are Yoruba and mixed Christians and Muslim. The feeling of 'we' and 'they' set in between the two parties. They are seeing 'we' as 'one' and 'they' as 'enemy'. The 'we' to a group creates unity among their group while 'they' creates enmity to the opposing or other group. Sequel to the belief of 'we' and 'they' even when there is a grazing land for the herders to graze, the owner of the land would not want to release it on the basis of 'they' are not part of 'we'. The negative feelings or attitude toward out group who do not belong or identify as same group has actually set in in-between herders and farmers. So this is the case of the Fulani herder and farmers in the Southern part of the country.

### **Empirical Review**

Several studies have analyzed and provided empirical evidences and analysis of the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria, its causes, consequences, and possible solutions. One empirical review on the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria is the study carried out by Lenshie, N.E., Okengwu, K., Ogbonna, C.N, & Ezeibe C (2020). They examined how herder-farmer disputes in Nigeria are impacted by desertification-induced migration and the state's inability to provide security governance. It was stated that inadequate security governance exacerbates herders' movement. The article titled "herdsmen and farmers conflicts in Nigeria: the implications for social social work practice by Aniche & Ngwu (2019), the study examined the

underlying causes of the conflict, the impact on social work, and possible solutions. Chukwuemeka, Nwankwo, Chidinma, Onwuegbuchunam and Agu (2019) examined farmer-herder conflicts and sustainable rural livelihoods in Nigeria. The study analyzes the effects of the conflict on the rural economy and proposes measures to address the conflict, including improved governance and community participation. Emmanuel and Ojo (2021) examined the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria, clearly assessed and reviewed the underlying causes and policy implications. The research provides an in-depth analysis of the underlying factors fueling the conflict, the implications for sustainable development, and policy recommendations to mitigate the conflict. Chinwe, Okoyeuzu and Eze (2021) investigated farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria focusing on an empirical assessment of its implications on socio-economic development. The study provided strategies to promote peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders.

Ofuoku (2010) researched on 'causes, effects and resolution of farmers-nomadic cattle herders' conflict in Delta State, Nigeria'. The study examined the causes, effects and thereafter proffered remedies to mitigate the occurrence of the conflict.

Dickson (2020) examined an empirical assessment of herders and farmers conflicts in Nigeria, 2000-2017). The study assessed herders and farmers conflicts in Nigeria and how it has been a threat to societal program. Turnera et.al. (2006) examined farmer-herder relations and conflict management in agro-pastoral zone of Niger. The study was used to determine the proximate and long-term causes of conflict over natural resource use, to evaluate the appropriateness of existing institutional arrangements for managing conflicts and identify innovative options and incentives to reduce the incidence and severity of conflicts. Southward and fuels the escalation of herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria

### **Methodology**

To address the specific objectives of the study, the mixed-method research approach was adopted i.e. Quantitative and Qualitative method. This mixed method was used to generate primary data because they rely on primary source. The four point scale likert-type questionnaire was used to elicit responses from participants.

The 4-point Likert Scale questionnaire ranges from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) to elicit responses from the respondents. The questionnaire was structured into three sections. The first page had information about the nature of the research, general instruction of how to respond to the items on the questionnaire and a portion indicated that participation approved their willingness to participate in the research. Section A relates to the demographic information of the participants such as Gender, Age, Place of Residence/Occupation and Occupation. While Section B and C relate to the questions used to investigate the subject matters (variables observing). The source of data is the primary data mainly from the structured questionnaire and In-depth Interview

The study was conducted in two stages. Stage one involved a pilot test to stimulate the main study, assess the validity and reliability of research instruments and the suitability of research participants; while the stage two involved the main study. Convenience sampling and voluntary response sampling were employed to select the participants at the market square

on two consecutive market days. The sample size is one hundred (100) respondents conveniently selected. The sample is limited to a hundred due to the lengthiness of the questionnaire and the education level of the participants, knowing fully well that the participants have low or no education. Descriptive research method and survey design was employed. Questionnaire and In-depth interview were used to obtained primary data for this study. Researcher-administered questionnaires method was adopted. The researcher read out the questions and answer options out for the respondents to pick the appropriate answer and the researcher tick appropriately on their behalf. Questions were standardized by ensuring that respondents receive the same questions with identical wording. To ensure the reliability and the internal consistency of the instrument for this study, a pilot test of the questionnaire was done using 20 farmers in Ilara-Mokin, Ondo State. The reliability test was carried out to determine Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient ( $\alpha$ ). Data collected from the pilot test was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The result of the instrument yielded 0.79.

## Results and Discussion

### *Section A: Demographic Information of Respondents (n=81)*

#### **Analyses of Demographic Information of Respondents (n=81)**

##### **Gender**

Table 1. Demographic Distribution of Respondents according to Gender

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Female	30	37.0
Male	51	63.0
Total	81	100.0

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2022.**

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents according to gender. Both male and female participated in this study. The result showed that the majority of respondents were male with 63.0%, while the female respondents were 37.0%.

##### **Age**

Table 2. Demographic Distribution of Respondents according to Age

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
24 Years and below	1	1.2
25-34 Years	26	32.1
35-44 Years	25	30.9
45-54 Years	21	25.9
55-64 Years	5	6.2
65 Years and above	3	3.7
Total	81	100.0

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2022.**

Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents according to their age range. The findings indicate that respondents within the age ranges of 25-34 years (32.1%), 35-44 years (30.9%) and 45-54 years (25.9%) are the majority of respondents that participated in this study. The result

shows that the categories of people participating in farming ranges between 25 years to 54years of age which is the most active period of human life.

### Place of Resident/Occupation

**Table 3.** Demographic Distribution of Respondents According Place of Resident/Occupation

Place of Resident/Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Outside Ogbese and Akure	2	2.5
Ogbese	73	90.1
Akure	6	7.4
Total	81	100.0

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2022.**

Table 3 shows where the respondents live and work.90.1% of the respondents resides in Ogbese while 9.9% reside within Akure and also outside Ogbese. This implies that 73% of the respondents reside at Ogbese Community.

### Occupation

**Table 4.** Demographic Distribution of Respondents according to their occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Full Time Farmer	45	55.6
Part Time Farmer	27	33.3
Civil Servants	2	2.5
Self-Employed	1	1.2
Public Servants	6	7.4
Total	81	100.0

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2022.**

Table 4 shows the distribution of respondents based on their occupation. The findings indicated that majority of the respondents are full farmers (55.6%) and Part-time farmers (33.3%) indicating a total of 88.9% farmers participated in the survey

### Analyses of Research Objectives

**Research Objective One:** Determine the causal factors of herders-farmers conflict in Ogbese Community.

**Table 5 showing factors causing herders-farmers conflict as reported by the respondents**

**N= 81**

S/N	Causal factors of Herders-farmers conflict in Ogbese Community	Frequency	Percentage (%)
i.	Scarcity of natural resources such as grazing land and water	48	59.3
ii.	Climate Change	10	12.3
iii.	Environmental degradation	7	8.6
iv.	Destruction of crops and farmland	80	98.8
v.	An Increase in population	4	4.9



vi.	Technological advancement	0	0
vii.	Attack on cattle and cattle rustling/theft	0	0
viii.	Social manipulation of ethno-religious biases.	0	0

**Source: Researcher’s fieldwork, 2022.**

Table 5 shows the causal factors of herders-farmers conflict in Ogbese Community. In the above table, destruction of crops and farmlands have the highest score of 98.8%, follows by scarcity of natural resources with the higher score of 59.3 percent and next to the factors that cause herders-farmers conflict is climate change with 12.3 percent. The others factors such as environmental degradation and increase in population have a slight influence of the herders-farmers conflict in Ogbese Community with 8.6 and 4.9 percent respectively. However, technological advancement, attack on cattle and cattle rustling and social manipulation of ethno-religious biases have no effect on the herders-farmers conflict in Ogbese Community. Therefore, destruction of crops and farmland, scarcity of natural resources, climate change, environmental degradation and an increase in pollution are accepted by the respondents as the major causes of herders-farmers conflict in Ogbese community.

**Research Objective Two:** Investigate effects of herders-farmers conflict on Socio-economic activities in Ogbese Community.

**Table 6 showing effects of herders-farmers conflict on socio-economic activities has reported by respondents of Ogbese Community.**

**N= 81**

Type of Effects	S A Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	S D Freq. (%)	Mea n	Std. Deviation
Loss of lives and properties	6 (7.4)	75 (92.6)	-	-	3.07	.264
Food shortage (farm produces) and high cost of food.	72 (88.9)	9 (11.1)	-	-	3.89	.316
Human insecurity, community restiveness and displacement	69 (85.2)	12 (14.3)	-	-	3.85	.357
Disunity among farmers and herders	68 (84.0)	13 (16.0)	-	-	3.84	.369
Sexual harassment such as raping of farmers’ wives and female children	66 (81.5)	15 (18.5)	-	-	3.81	.391
Low income and unemployment	70 (86.4)	11 (13.6)	-	-	3.86	.345
Maiming and injuries of victims and abduction	69 (85.2)	12 (14.8)	-	-	3.85	.357

**Source: Researcher’s fieldwork, 2022.**

Table 6 shows effects of herders-farmers conflict on socio-economic activities in Ogbese Community. In the above table, considering the seven postulated effects of herders-farmers conflict on socio-economic activities in Ogbese Community. The mean scores ranging from 3.07 to 3.89 and the standard deviation has the highest of .391 to the least of .264. Respondents have over 70 percent agreed that herders-farmers conflict have significantly affected socio-economic activities of the residents of Ogbese Community in the aspect of loss of lives and properties, food shortage and high cost of food, human insecurity, community restiveness and displacement, disunity among farmers and herders, sexual harassment, low income and unemployment and lastly maiming and abduction of their victims.

**Research Objective Three:** To find out the various forms and the extent of awareness of intervention programmes that the state government has embarked on towards herders-farmers conflict resolution in Ogbese Community.

**Table 7 showing the level of awareness of Government Intervention programme as reported by the respondents**

N = 81

Awareness of Government Intervention Programme	S A Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	S D Freq. (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Establishment of Amotekun Corps	52 (64.2)	29 (35.8)	-	-	3.64	.482
Passing of anti-open grazing law	12 (14.8)	69 (85.2)	-	-	3.15	.357
Banning herders from forest reserves	20 (24.7)	61 (75.3)	-	-	3.25	.434
Registration of herders with the Ministry of Agriculture	13 (16.0)	66 (81.5)	2 (2.5)	-	3.14	.411
Restriction of underage herders	13 (16.0)	67 (82.8)	1 (1.2)	-	3.15	.391
Initiation of interactive forums between farmers, herders and state officials.	12 (14.8)	68 (84.0)	1 (1.2)	-	3.14	.379
Facilitation of inter-agency corporations in the area of security by the government.	11 (13.6)	56 (69.1)	13 (16.0)	1 (1.2)	2.95	.590

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2022.**

Table 7 shows the level of awareness of the government intervention program. The establishment of Amotekun Corps; passing of Anti-Open Grazing law and banning herders from forest reserves were fully and well known to the respondents. While 80 percent of the respondents were aware of the restriction of underage herders and the initiation of interactive forums between farmers, herders and state officials, 79 percent of the respondents were aware of the registration of herders with the Ministry of Agriculture and lastly only 67 percent of the respondents were aware of the facilitation of inter-agency corporations in the area of security

by the government. The mean scores range from 2.95 to 3.64 while the standard deviation has the highest of .590 to the least of .357. Therefore, the reports from the respondents implied that the level of the awareness of government intervention programme is very high in Ogbese Community.

**Research Objective Four:** To ascertain the efficacy of the various state government intervention programmes in resolving herders-farmers conflict in Ogbese Community.

**Table 8 showing the efficacy of Government Intervention Programme in herders-farmers conflict reduction as reported by the respondents in Ogbese Community**

N= 81

<b>Efficacy of the Government Intervention Programmes in Herders-farmers conflict Reduction</b>	<b>S A Freq. (%)</b>	<b>A Freq. (%)</b>	<b>D Freq. (%)</b>	<b>S D Freq. (%)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Efficacy of Amotekun Corps in reducing herders-farmers conflict	44 (54.3)	35 (43.2)	-	2 (2.5)	1.48	.550
Efficacy of anti-open grazing law in reducing herders-farmers conflict	68 (84.0)	12 (14.8)	-	1 (1.2)	1.17	.412
Efficacy of banning of herders from forest reserves in reducing herders-farmers conflict	67 (82.8)	13 (16.0)	-	1 (1.2)	1.19	.422
Efficacy of enforcement of the registration of herders in the Ministry of Agriculture in reducing herders and farmers	66 (81.5)	14 (17.3)	-	1 (1.2)	1.20	.431
Efficacy of restriction of underage herders in reducing herders-farmers conflict	67 (82.8)	13 (16.0)	-	1 (1.2)	1.20	.485
Efficacy of initiation of interactive forums between farmers, herders and state officials in reducing herders-farmers conflict.	63 (77.8)	18 (22.2)	-	-	1.23	.455
Efficacy of facilitation of inter-agency corporations in the area of security by the government in reducing herders-farmers conflict	64 (79.0)	16 (19.8)	1 (1.2)	-	1.23	.507

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2022.**

Table 8 shows efficacy of the government intervention programmes in herders-farmers conflict reduction. In the above table the degree of the efficacy of all the seven strategies programmes put in place by the government were rated very high, that is, ranges from 97.5 percent to 100 percent. The mean scores range from 1.17 to 1.48 while the standard deviation has the highest of .550 to the least of .412. This implies that most of the intervention programmes put in place by the state government have been so far effective in reducing the herders-farmers conflict.

**Research Objective Five:** To find out the acceptability of the various intervention programmes of government in reducing herders-farmers conflict in Ogbese Community

**Table 9 shows the level of acceptability of the various intervention programmes of government by the respondents in reducing herders-farmers conflict.**

Acceptability of Government Intervention Programmes	S A Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	S D Freq. (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Acceptability of Amotekun Corps as a tool of Conflict reduction	69 (85.2)	12 (14.8)	-	-	3.85	.359
Acceptability of anti-open grazing law as a tool of conflict reduction	72 (88.9)	9 (11.1)	-	-	3.85	.359
Acceptability of banning of herders from forest reserves as a tool of conflict reduction	69 (85.2)	12 (14.8)	-	-	3.85	.359
Acceptability of registration of herders with the Ministry of Agriculture as a means of conflict reduction.	68 (84.0)	13 (16.0)	-	-	3.84	.371
Acceptability of restriction of underage herders as a means of conflict reduction.	66 (81.5)	15 (18.5)	-	-	3.85	.359
Acceptability of initiation of interactive forums between farmers, herders and state officials as a tool of conflict reduction	67 (82.3)	14 (17.3)	-	-	3.83	.382
Acceptability of facilitation of inter-agency corporations in the area of security by the government as means of conflict reduction.	68 (84.0)	13 (16.0)	-	-	3.84	.371

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2022.**

Table 9 shows the extent of which the respondents accept the various intervention programmes of government in reducing herders-farmers conflict. In the above table, the establishment of Amotekun Corps, the anti-open grazing law, banning of herders from forest reserves, compulsory registration of herders with the Ministry of Agriculture, restriction of underage herders, initiation of interactive forums between farmers, herders and state officials and facilitation of inter-agencies corporation in the area of security received have 100 percent score by the respondents. Looking at their mean scores of 3.83 to 3.85 and the standard deviation of .359 to the least of .382 shows the community's acceptance of the government interventions. Therefore, this implies that all the various intervention programmes of government used as tools in reducing herders-farmers conflict were well embraced and accepted by the respondents.

**Research Objective Six:** To examine the inevitable consequences of the state government intervention on the herders-farmers conflict in Ogbese Community.

**Table 10 showing the inevitable consequences of the state government intervention programmes in reducing herders-farmers conflict**

Consequences of the state government intervention in reducing herders-farmers conflict	S A Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	S D Freq. (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Migration of herders to neighbouring states	2 (2.4)	-	11 (13.6)	68 (84.0)	1.21	.564
Cost of protein (beef) in various community markets	1 (1.2)	-	13 (16.0)	67 (82.8)	1.20	.485
Socio-economic activities.	1 1.2	-	18 (22.2)	62 (76.6)	1.26	.519
Ethnicity sentiment among the indigenes towards the herders	-	-	19 (23.4)	62 (76.6)	1.26	.519
Induction on socio-cultural diversity negatively	1 (1.2)	-	17 (21.0)	63 (77.8)	1.25	.513
Socio-political relationship between the state and the federal government	11 (13.6)	43 (53.1)	21 (25.9)	6 (7.4)	2.73	.791
Reduction of population of the state	1 (1.2)	-	13 (16.0)	67 (82.8)	1.20	.485

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2022. N=81**

Table 10 shows the consequences of the state government intervention in reducing herders-farmers conflict on migration, cost of protein (beef), socio-economic activities, political, ethnicity and population.

The total percentage of respondents that disagreed coupled with strongly disagreed ranges from 97.6 to 98.8 as regards migration of the herders to neighbouring states, cost of protein, socio-economic activities, ethnicity and population except for the political aspects with a low

percentage of 33.3. This implies that government intervention in reducing herders-farmers conflict did not have negative effect on relocation of the people to neighbouring states, socio-economic, ethnicity, population and socio-cultural diversity. But has adversely effect on the political relationship between the state government and the federal government.

### **Discussion of Findings**

It has been established from the existing literature and empirical evidences in the study of herders-farmers conflict that scarcity of natural resources such as grazing land and water; destruction of crops and farmland; climate change; environmental degradation, an increase in population; technology advancement; attack on cattle, herders claiming right of ownership, social manipulation of ethno-religious biases are the major causal factors that are inducing or instigating the herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria(International Conflicts Group, 2017;

Ilo, Jonathan-Ichaver & Adamolekun. 2019; Lenshie, Okengwu, Ogbonma & Ezeibe, 2020; Mercy Corp, Abuja, 2015; Omilusi, 2016; Hembe, 2005; Ukamaka et al., 2017). The findings of this study which is restricted to Ogbese Community has validated that scarcity of natural resources such as grazing land and water and destruction of crops and farmland caused by the herders are the major internal causal factors that are initiating the conflict between the herders and farmers in Ondo State. This finding is consistent with the studies of Bankole, (2021); Ilo, et. al. (2019); Lenshie, Okengwu, Ogbonma & Ezeibe, (2020); Mercy Corp, Abuja, (2015); Torimiro, et.al. (2020) who revealed that herders are encroaching into farmers' farms to feed their cattle at the expense of farmers who dare not challenge them else, they attacked the farmers and killed some or leave some injured. This implies that if these causes are not deal with, conflict between the parties will not cease to be happening.

In addition, according to this current studies, the finding also revealed that the agenda of the Fulani was to fulanize or take over the country(Interview, March 10, 2022), hence, they used the Fulani herders as one of the weapons or tools to enable them achieve them mission by frustrating the farmers. The negative effects of herders-farmers conflict on socio-economic activities have been established by extant literature that herders-farmers conflict has led to several death, loss of properties, shortage of farm produce, high cost of foods, human insecurity and displacement, community restiveness, disunity among the farmers and herders, sexual harassment, low income and unemployment, maiming and abduction. The finding of this study at Ogbese Community validated that there is nothing short of these facts. Therefore, the findings is consistent with the studies of Udegbuma, (2021); Amnesty International, (2018). Ajibefun (2018).The Researcher has investigated the various forms of programme and level of awareness of the intervention programmes that the state government put in place in controlling and reducing the herders-farmers conflict in Ondo State. The findings of this study has confirmed the various strategic steps that the state government used in reducing the herders-farmers conflict and the full awareness of these steps or programmes by the respondents, which include: The establishment of Amotekun Corps; The enacted of anti-open grazing law; the banning of herders from the Ondo State Forest Reserves; mandatory Registration of herders with the State Agency; restriction of underage herders; Initiation of interactive forums between the farmers, herders and concerned state officials; Facilitation of inter-agency corporations in the area of security. Furthermore, the study on the efficacy of the various intervention steps or programmes to manage the herders-farmers

conflict has revealed that the effect of the existence of these programmes have a great effect in reducing the herders-farmers conflict and other criminal activities in Ogbese Community and other neighbouring towns especially at the Akure Metropolis which is the Capital of Ondo State. Lastly, it was observed that the inevitable consequences of the state government intervention programmes only created a chafe in the socio-political relationship between the state and the federal government. However, the cost implication of establishing the State Security Network (Amotekun Corps) to supplement the efforts of the Security Agencies in the state was quite massive (Interview, February 1, 2022).

### **Implication of Findings**

The findings of this study are especially significant given the high rate of death, loss of properties and the socio-economic effects that have resulted from herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria. Herders-farmers conflict has posed a great threat to the national development. This study helps to understand how the Ondo State Government has been able to manage and reduce the conflict between the two conflicting parties. This study has revealed the causal factors of herders-farmers conflict in Ondo State, its effects on socio-economic activities, the awareness, acceptability and efficacy of the government intervention in reducing herders-farmers conflict and its consequences in the aspect of migration, socio-economic activities, ethnicity sentiment, socio-political, socio-cultural diversity and population within the state. Furthermore, the research presented here contributes to the literature on herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria. In particular, it reveals the major causes of herders-farmers conflict in the state and how the state government has been able to reduce the conflict and restore peace to an extent or some degree. Lastly, this research suggests and recommends some crucial recommendations for continuous effective management of the herders-farmers conflict and the way forward for total suppression of the conflict both within the states and across the nation at large.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study has examined and established the existence and occurrence of herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria and particular in Ondo State, Southwest, Nigeria. The continuous reoccurrence of the conflicts has led to loss of lives and properties. This remains a problematic issue to the citizens and the state government. Efficient and effective management of conflict is fundamental and paramount to the development of any society or nation. But the prevailing herders-farmers conflict situation in Nigeria has constituted a reversal of this reality. The inability of the Federal Government to effectively manage the crises has led to the situation of which some of the state government especially in South-West, Nigeria to strategically establish some laws; provide additional state security codenamed 'Amotekun' to supplement the existing security agents in the state and put some programmes in place in order to reduce the herders-farmers conflict before it totally get out of hands. Based on the findings of this study, the following were recommended as means by which conflict between herders and farmers could be minimized and probably eradicated both in Ondo State and the nation as a whole: Northern States' Governments should take good care of their herders by dedicating part of their land to grow pastures (ranch) that will be used to feed cattle since rearing of cattle is the major occupation in Northern part of Nigeria and should encourage and establish ranching system, trainings, and provide fund and loan at very low interest to herders to enhance cattle business. Ondo State Government needs to employ more knowledgeable

personnel and re-strengthen the securities services of Amotekun and equipped them with modern sophisticated weapons and give them more training to enable them perform as expected and effectively; encouraging individual cattle owners to acquire land for ranching which is the practice in other civilized countries. Lastly, modern way of rearing cattle – ranching should be made mandatory for the indigenous herders to embrace with the support of the state government or cattle owner should acquire land for ranching which is the practice in other civilized country.

In addition, with the present stage of herders-farmers conflict in Ondo State, without intervention and consistent intervention, herders-farmers conflict may gradually progresses from mild conflict to severe conflict that may sabotage the peace of the state and the entire country.

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Desertification, migration, and herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria: rethinking the ungoverned spaces thesis

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