

FARMERS/PASTORALISTS CONFLICTS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BENUE STATE OF NIGERIA

Prof. A. Okwori

Benue State University, Makurdi

M. E. Angenyi

College of Education, Katsina-Ala

Abstract

The study examined farmers/pastoralists conflicts on the management of primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 11,987 teachers drawn from 4,407 primary schools in Benue State. A total of 400 teachers from 120 primary schools constituted the sample. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample size from the three Senatorial Districts of Benue State. A self-structured questionnaire titled Farmers/Pastoralists Conflicts and School Management Questionnaire (FPCSMQ) was used to collect data. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions while chi-square (X^2) test of goodness-of-fit was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that farmers/pastoralists conflicts negatively influenced infrastructural facilities utilization and students' enrolment in primary schools in Benue State to a high extent. It was recommended among other things that the Federal and State Governments should as a matter of urgency ensure the ban of open grazing in Benue and other parts of the country to stop the conflict that often results into killings and destruction of properties.

Key words: Farmers, Pastoralists, Conflicts, Management, Primary Schools

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

M. E. Angenyi

e-mail: mfaangenyi@gmail.com

Introduction

Education is an instrument per excellence and is crucial to the development of the nation. Its continuous growth depends on a number of factors. Some of these factors are the provision of infrastructural facilities, quality of teachers, prompt payment of teachers' emoluments, provision and constant revision of the curriculum (Ogbonnaya, 2013). The factors mentioned above are paramount and can bring the desired growth where they are pursued and provided. On the other hand, where there is any inhibition and they are not pursued, it stifles growth and slows down the education process. Apart from the factors mentioned above, there are some other factors that could stifle the process of growth in the education industry. These factors are incidental factors identified by the researcher and in the context of this article they include natural disasters (flood, storm, and fire outbreak), insurgencies, and crises emanating from farmers-pastoralists disagreement otherwise termed farmers/pastoralists conflict.

Generally, conflict is the act of coming into collision, clash or being in opposition with one another. It is the tension that is experienced when a group of people feels that their needs or desires are likely to be denied. Onsarigo (2007) sees conflict as a condition when one party feels that the other party has frustrated or is about to frustrate certain concerns of that party. It therefore, implies that conflicts exist whenever an action by one person or a group of persons prevents, obstructs and interferes with the desires of a particular individual or a group of people. Agu (2005) attests to Onsarigo's point of view that conflict manifests when someone has a chance to achieve his or her purpose at the expense of someone else.

Conflict according to Robert (2006) is a turning point that distinguishes the outcome of an event unfavourably between life and death, violence or non-violence and resolution or protracted conflicts. Koeb and Eilson (2016) on the other hand state that conflict is a disjoined process that results in the disruption or destruction of all bonds of unity that previously existed between two disputants. Thus, conflicts arise when ever two or more groups seek to possess the same item, occupy the same space or an exclusive position plays an incompatible role, maintains incompatible goals or undertakes mutually incompatible means of achieving certain purpose.

According to Aliyu (2004), conflicts in Nigeria are of diverse types and have been on rapid increase since after the Civil War of 1967 – 1970. These conflicts are mainly attributable to resource control and divergent value systems in the country. In Nigeria, conflict between pastoralists and farmers arise from disagreements over the use of land around farmland and/or grazing areas and stock routes and access to water points for both animals and households. The movement of pastoralists from one area of the country to another is usually caused by the increasing demand for fresh grazing grounds especially during draught period, when the pastoralists move southwards because of the availability of pasture. In most cases, the pastoralists encounter problems with the local people because farmers' crops are being destroyed by their cattle (Paul, 2015). A range of factors underlie these disputes, including porous borders, proliferation of small and light weapons in the rural areas, destruction of crops by cattle, cattle rustling, increased competition for land (driven by desertification, climate change and population growth), lack of clarity around the demarcation of pasture and stock routes, and the breakdown of traditional relationships and formal agreements between pastoralists and farmers (Paul, 2015).

Fasona and Omojola (2005) contend that of the conflicts and other forms of unrest reported in Northern Nigeria between 1991 to date, farmers-headers conflicts account

for about 35%. These conflicts have snowballed to other regions of the country with the north-central becoming the major theatre of war within the last four years and the casualties of these confrontations is enormous. As stated above, the north central region of Nigeria of which Benue State is part seems to be the hotbed of farmers-pastoralists conflict. Benue State appears to have recorded the highest number of incidences of farmers-herders conflict in recent time.

Sequel to the above, it is important to note that the farmers-herdsmen conflict assumed devastating dimension in Benue and other states of Nigeria. It has affected local government areas like Agatu, Guma, Logo, Gwer-West, Gwer-East, Ukum, Buruku, Katsina-Ala, Kwande and Makurdi all in Benue State. In the recent attack which occurred in Guma and Logo Local Governments, about 73 people were killed and property worth millions of naira destroyed. In these local governments, the attackers usually invaded the settlements, killed, sacked the people, and destroyed their property and farm lands. In some communities, they occupy the areas after chasing away the original dwellers. Aside killing and destruction of property, their activity affect the management of primary schools as they often settle in these schools and destroy the facilities. This renders classrooms and offices unusable as well as truncating academic activities. According to the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), 2012, about 80,450 children are currently trapped in eight Internally Displaced Peoples' (IDP) camps established by the Benue State Government to cater for victims of herdsmen incursions in the state. Out of these numbers, LGEA Primary School, Daudu Camp is hosting 10,871 children while LGEA Primary School, Ugba Camp is accommodating 7,569 children. The takeover of school premises by IDPs has rendered academic work in such places impossible.

Management of primary schools which requires proper planning, directing, monitoring and controlling of human, material, time and physical resources, finances, records and information flow has been affected drastically as most school facilities and documents have been destroyed thereby keeping students and teachers out of the school (Ahmed, 2015).

The incessant destruction of lives and property has created management problems for school teachers and head-teachers in such areas. According to Suleiman (2016), when farmers and herders clash, infrastructural facilities in the schools such as classroom buildings, offices, books and other relevant documents are greatly destroyed or damaged. Most often, schools are burnt down to ashes in the rural areas. This makes it hard for learners to continue with their learning activities for a long time as they relocate to safer places with their families.

The carnage also brings about decreased school enrolment in some parts of the state that are affected by the crises. The emotional and psychological problems created in the people as a result of the fear further leads to decreased enrolment (Joseph, 2017). The author further notes that even parents who have returned from the internally displaced people's camp, prefer to stay at home with their children, to sending them back to school to continue their education. According to most parents interviewed by the researcher, they prefer to stay at home with their children because they do not know when next the Fulani herders are coming to attack. This psychological problem further aggravates the enrolment situation in the affected areas in Benue State. On the whole school enrolment reduces drastically even when normalcy returns to some areas because many people, who left the rural areas in search of peace and school for the children, may not return. Thus, Benue state which has a high school enrolment is nowhere to be found

as far as school enrolment is concerned as most school aged children are found in Internally Displaced Persons Camps.

Ahmed (2015) notes that when there is natural disaster or farmers/pastoralists clash in an area, it affects enrolment because many people will run from their places of abode to safer places. When there is insurgence like Boko Haram, for instance or the Fulani Herdsmen crises, many people will flee the area for safety. This affects the population of the area generally, school enrolment and the quality of education generally.

In addition, the researchers observed that there has been a steady decline in school enrolment for over two decades in most rural areas across the state. This decline in school enrolment is further worsened by some of the incidental factors mentioned above. In Benue State of Nigeria, for over three years now, the researchers observed that there has been a steady decline in school enrolment which seems to be as a result of crises between the Fulani cattle herdsman and the peasant farmers of the area. Some of the towns and villages in the affected local government have been deserted by the occupants. This crisis has affected school enrolment, teaching/learning and educational quality improvement advocated for. The Federal Government of Nigeria and Benue State Governments have made concerted attempts to ensure that peace returns to the areas and that the internally displaced persons return from camp to their homes, but this seems not to have yielded meaningful results as most people are yet to return. Buttressing this point, Rick (2015) notes that conflict between farmers and Fulani herders often forces parents to relocate with their families to places that are safe from the conflict area which influences their children's education as these new places may not have educational facilities.

From the forgoing, one would understand that, these conflicts between farmers and Fulani pastoralists have not only affected the infrastructural facilities and school enrolment but the entire educational system in the state and other parts of the country. It is in view of the above background that the researcher deemed it necessary to assess the extent of influence of farmers-pastoralists conflicts on the management of primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the efforts of governments, parents, non-governmental organizations and the administrators of public primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria to ensure a conducive teaching and learning environment that will enhance students' performance, the problems associated with farmers-pastoralists conflicts seem to hamper and overwhelm these efforts. This may influence the management of primary schools in terms of school facilities utilization and enrolment as thousands of these pupils who may have moved with their parents to places of safety may have had their schooling programme distorted. When they return, they may have lost the memory of what was taught as they may not have had access to education at all. The problem of the study was therefore to assess the extent of influence of farmers/pastoralists conflict on the management of primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the extent of influence of farmers-pastoralists conflicts on the management of primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out the extent to which farmers-pastoralists conflicts influence the utilization of infrastructural facilities in primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the extent to which farmers-pastoralists conflicts influence school enrolment in primary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do farmers-pastoralists conflicts influence the utilization of infrastructural facilities in primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria?
2. To what extent do farmers-pastoralists conflicts influence school enrolment in primary schools?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Farmers-pastoralists conflicts have no significant influence on the utilization of infrastructural facilities in primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria.
2. Farmers-pastoralists conflicts have no significant influence on school enrolment in Primary Schools.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The study was conducted in Benue State of Nigeria. The population comprised 11,987 teachers from 4,407 primary schools in Benue State during the 2016/2017 academic session. A sample of 400 (3%) respondents from 120 (3%) primary schools was selected using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. This sample is considered adequate since it is in line with Achor and Ejigbo's (2006) recommendation that for a larger population, a sample of 10% of the population is adequate. Achor and Ejigbo, further stress that the percentage could be higher or less depending on the population of the study.

A researcher-structured questionnaire titled "Farmers-Pastoralist Conflict and School Management Questionnaire (FPCSMQ)" was used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into Sections A and B. Section A contained information on the personal data of the respondents, while Section B contained information that bordered on the assessment of farmers-pastoralist conflicts and the management of primary schools in Benue State. The responses of teachers were collated and analyzed for results. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The decision was based on the real limit of numbers, hence a mean response score of 3.50 – 4.00 was considered Very High Extent (VHE), 2.50 – 3.49 High Extent (HE), and 1.50 - 2.49 Low Extent (LE), while 0.50 – 1.49 was considered as Very Low Extent (VLE). The chi-square test of goodness-of-fit was used to test the hypotheses at $p < 0.05$ level of significance.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The results were analyzed and interpreted in line with the research questions and hypotheses as follows:

Research Question One: To what extent do farmers-pastoralists conflicts influence the utilization of infrastructural facilities in primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation on the Extent of Influence of Farmers-Pastoralists Conflicts on the Provision of Infrastructural Facilities in Primary Schools in Benue State.

Item No	Item Description	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Farmers-pastoralists conflicts Lead to the under utilization of classrooms in primary schools in my area.	99	152	79	70	2.70	1.03	High Extent
2	Conflicts between farmers and Fulani-herders have led to the destruction of staff offices.	89	179	99	33	2.81	0.88	High Extent
3	Farmers-Pastoralists conflicts Have led to the destruction of classroom desks.	141	186	35	38	3.08	0.90	High Extent
4	Farmers-pastoralists conflicts Have caused damage to school records in primary schools.	111	177	76	36	2.91	0.91	High Extent
5	Farmers-pastoralists conflicts Lead to the damaging of teaching aids.	138	148	35	79	2.86	1.18	High Extent
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation						2.87	0.98	High Extent

Table 1 shows that the staff rating of items 1-5 were 2.70, 2.81, 3.08, 2.91 and 2.86 respectively with corresponding standard deviations of 1.03, 0.88, 0.99, 0.91, and 1.18. Based on the cut-off point of 2.50, the staff rated all the items to a high extent indicating that farmers-pastoralists conflicts lead to the burning down and under utilization of classrooms in primary schools in their areas. That conflict between farmers and Fulani-herders has led to the destruction of staff offices in primary schools. The respondents also agreed to a high extent that farmers-pastoralists conflicts have led to the destruction of classroom desks. They also affirmed that farmers-pastoralists conflicts have caused damage to the school records in primary schools. More so, that farmers-pastoralists conflicts lead to the damaging of teaching aids. The cluster mean of 2.87 and standard deviation of 0.98 were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that farmers-pastoralists conflicts influence the under utilization of infrastructural facilities in primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria to a high extent.

Research Question Two: To what extent do farmers-pastoralists conflicts influence school enrolment in primary schools?

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation on the Extent of Influence of Farmers-Pastoralists Conflicts on School Enrolment in Primary Schools.

Item No	Item Description	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	X	SD	Decision
6.	Farmers-pastoralists conflicts Have made parents to move Their wards from the rural primary schools to towns where there are more security agents.	123	166	47	64	2.87	1.03	High influence
7.	Farmers-Pastoralists conflicts Have led to the death of many school aged children thereby reducing pupils' population in schools.	90	154	100	56	2.70	0.97	High influence
8.	Farmers-pastoralists conflicts Have killed parents of school aged children thereby leaving no one to enroll such children in in school.	63	200	112	25	2.75	0.79	High influence
9.	Farmers-Pastoralists conflicts Have disabled many school aged Children thereby making it difficult For their parents to enroll them in school.	164	166	36	34	3.15	0.91	High influence
10.	Farmers-pastoralists conflicts Scare many parents from Enrolling their children in the school for the fear of being killed by the Fulani herders.	120	190	41	49	2.95	0.95	High influence
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation						2.88	0.93	High influence

Table 2 shows that staff rating of items, 6-10 were 2.87, 2.70, 2.75, 3.15 and 2.95 respectively with corresponding standard deviations of 1.03, 0.97, 0.79, 0.91 and 0.95. Based on the data, the respondents agreed that farmers-pastoralists conflicts have made parents to move their wards from the rural primary schools to urban primary schools where there is tighter security. They also agreed to a high extent that farmers-pastoralists conflicts have led to the death of many school aged children thereby reducing pupils' population in schools and that farmers-pastoralists conflicts have resulted in the death of parents of school aged children thereby leaving no one to enroll such children in school. The table also shows that farmers-pastoralists conflicts have disabled many school aged children thereby making it difficult for their parents to enroll them in schools to a high extent. Moreover, the respondents indicated to a high extent that farmers-pastoralists conflicts scare many parents from enrolling their children in the school for the fear of being killed by the Fulani herders. The cluster mean of 2.88 with standard deviation of 0.93 were rated above the cut-off mark of 2.50. This implies that farmers-pastoralists conflicts influence school enrolment in primary schools to a high extent.

Hypothesis One: Farmers-pastoralists conflicts have no significant influence on the utilization of infrastructural facilities in primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria.

Table 3: Chi-square Test of the Extent of Influence of Farmers-Pastoralists Conflicts on the Utilization of Infrastructural Facilities in Primary Schools.

Opinions	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	df	Level of sig	X ² -cal	X ² -tab	P-value	Decision
VHE	93	100	3	0.05	40.460	7.815	.000	Significant
HE	158	100						
LE	87	100						
VLE	62	100						
Total	400							

Values in parentheses are percentages ($X^2 = 40.460$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.05 > 0.00$)

Table 3 shows that X^2 cal. = 40.460 $\alpha > 7.815$; $P < .05$ with 3 degrees of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that farmers-pastoralists conflicts have no significant influence on the utilization of infrastructural facilities in primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria was not accepted. This means that farmers-pastoralists conflicts have significant negative influence on the utilization of infrastructural facilities in primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: Farmers-Pastoralists conflicts have no significant influence on school enrollment in primary schools.

Table 4: Chi-square Test of the Extent of Influence of Farmers-Pastoralists Conflicts in School Enrollment in Primary Schools.

Opinions	Observed Frequency	expected frequency	df	Level of sig	X ² -cal	X ² -tab	P-value	Decision
VHE	180	100						
HE	109	100	3	0.05	89.900	7.815	.000	Significant
LE	62	100						
VLE	49	100						
Total	400							

Table 4 shows that X^2 cal. = 89.900 $\alpha > 7.815$; $P < 0.05$ with 3 degrees of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that farmers-pastoralists conflicts have no significant influence on school enrolment in primary schools was not accepted. This means that farmers-pastoralists conflicts have significant negative influence on school enrolment in primary schools.

Discussions of Findings

The first finding of this study revealed that farmers-pastoralists conflict have significant negative influence on the utilization of infrastructural facilities in primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria. This is in line with Suleiman (2016) who found that

farmers-herders clashes strongly affect infrastructural facilities in the schools such as classroom buildings, offices, books, and other relevant documents. Most often, schools are burnt down to ashes in the rural areas. This makes it difficult for learners to continue with their learning activities for a long time as they relocate to safer places with their families. This is so because the target of the attackers is to destroy whatever they find on ground including lives.

The second finding of the study shows that farmers-pastoralists conflicts have significant negative influence on school enrolment in primary schools. This finding coincides with that of Ahmed (2015) who notes that when there are farmers-pastoralists clash in an area, it affects enrolment because many people will run from their places of abode to safer places and this affects the population of the area generally, school enrolment and the quality of educational services. This is possible as people would not want to stay for the sake of their wards education to be killed by the invaders. As a result, people take to their heels for safety and this movement in no small measure affects the enrolment of their children in school.

Conclusion

Based on the result of this study, it was established that farmers-pastoralists conflicts have significant negative influence on the management of primary schools in Benue State in the areas of infrastructural facilities utilization and pupils' enrolment to a high extent. These conflicts undermine educational development and economic growth by destroying the productive segment of the society. The worst part is that many pupils in Benue State have failed to be enrolled in school during this calamity. These farmers-pastoralists clash also forces pupils to relocate with parents to places that are safer from the crisis.

Recommendations

1. The Federal Government of Nigeria should as a matter of urgency, use all security apparatus as to ensure the immediate implementation of the Open grazing prohibition law in Benue State and other parts of the country to stop the incessant killings and destruction of lives and property.
2. The Federal Government of Nigeria, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and indeed wealthy individuals should embark on reconstruction of buildings and other infrastructures destroyed in the carnage. This will encourage the people to send their children back to school.
3. Finally there is the need to empower the internally displaced persons through such means as asset ownership and access to credit facilities. Empowering them will make them to be productive and create wealth through the multiplier effect. The gains from their businesses can be used to enroll and support their children in schools.

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