

Socio-Economic Implications Of Fulani Herders And Jukun Kona Conflict In Jalingo Local Government Area, Taraba State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Resource ownership and utilisation have directly and indirectly defined the dimensions of most conflicts involving man since ancient time. The Fulani herdersmen -Jukun Kona conflict that led to wanton destruction of lives and property portends grave socio-economic consequences in Jalingo local government area of Taraba State. The objective of this study is to discuss the socio-economic implications of this conflict. The study adopted qualitative and phenomenological approaches in its investigation and analysis of data drawn from both secondary and primary source. The secondary sources of data were drawn from newspapers, book and journals while the primary source was from oral interviews with selected individuals with knowledge about the conflict. The study adopted Eco-violence theory by Homer-Dixon as its theoretical perspective. The study found out that the communal conflict which took religious dimension led to loss of 51 lives and animals, also houses, properties, 29 shops and 2 mosques burnt; 19,100 people have been displaced from their homes and many traders relocated from Kasuwan Bera to Jauro Ganah market and formed a parallel market. The paper recommends amicable arrangement for settling disputes between the two parties and that government should make efforts to demarcate cattle routes and grazing area through strong legislation and security agents need to be proactive in managing conflict and prosecution of people arrested in connection with any conflict.

Keywords: Conflict, Socio-economic, Fulani herdersmen, Jukun Kona, Kasuwan Bera, Agricultural Land, Eco-violence

Introduction

It is a common fact that resource ownership and utilisation have directly and indirectly defined the dimensions of most conflicts involving man since ancient time. Of all resources, however Land has remained an overwhelming source of conflicts among various user group as well as individuals at varying thresholds. In particular, the continuous conflict between farmers and herdersmen in the use of agricultural land are becoming fiercer and increasingly widespread in Nigeria, largely due to increase in productive activities as a result of ever increasing human population (Gefu & Kolawole, 2005).

Keghku (2004, p.149) cited in Abass, I.M. (2012) posited that "it has since been realized that not all conflicts are harmful and that perhaps a certain level of conflict is inevitable. The need therefore is to understand the cause of conflict and to develop constructive measures to control and use the energies realized by the conflict. In essence, conflict per se is not bad but it is the way it is managed to reduce its harmful effects and benefit from its good efforts as it applies to pernicious and positive propaganda in public relations parlance. Blench (2010) also highlighted four major factors that affect conflict between herdersmen and farmers as: the collapse of the traditional system of cattle routes; the declining importance of dairy production; migration and disease; and the intensification of agriculture in riverine areas known as fadama cultivation. McGregor (2014) cited in Abdulbarkindo, A & Alupse, B. (2015). Reported that for a decades now conflict between herdersmen and farmers has been a reoccurring issue in Nigeria most especially in the North Central States or Middle Belt region of Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba and some parts of Kaduna State. Conflict in Ibi local government of Taraba of State is threatening the livelihood resources of people particularly farming communities due to high dependent on natural resources for survival

The recent conflict between Fulani herdersmen and Jukun Kona people in Ardo-Kola Local Government Area of Taraba state is not an exception from the various farmers-herders conflicts across Nigeria. The Jukun Kona People are mostly crop farmers while the Fulani herdersmen are mostly pastoralists and both occupations need land hence there is frequent issue of animals encroachment into farmlands which mostly resulted to conflicts between the Fulani herdersmen and Jukun Kona people and the conflict has taken another dimension of continuous attacks and reprisal attacks between the two ethnic groups which have been living together peacefully for many years.

According to Blench (1994) cited in Victor, Godwin & Yange (2015) in the period before the beginning of 20th century, the conflict between farmers and herders was mainly restricted to savannah belts of West Africa. Cattle rearing were mainly prevalent in the Guinea, Sudan and Sahel Savanna belts where crop production was carried out only during the short rainy season on a small scale. This gave the cattle herders access to vast area of grassland. But with the current realities of increased human population and crop production, the herders face shortage of grazing land which necessitated encroachment into farmlands in order to feed their animals and this resulted to constant conflicts.

The conflicts between farmers and herdsmen have not only heightened the level of insecurity, but have also demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the food crisis in Nigeria and other affected countries due to loss of lives, animals, crops and valuable properties (Cotula, Toulmin & Hesse, 2004).

De Hann (2002) reported that while farmers cited destruction of crops by cattle and other properties by the pastoralists as the main causes of the conflicts, the pastoralists on the other hand, cited burning of rangeland and fadama and blockage of cattle routes and water points due to increase farming activities as major direct reasons for the conflict. The devastating effects on human lives and properties as a result of these clashes are quite real.

Fasona & Omojola (2005) reported that there appears to be a very strong correlation between the patterns of the clashes and human security. Human restiveness and communal clashes have become more prevalent in the savannahs where intensive and extensive crop production activities are particularly predominant around the flood plains. The implications of all these may put question marks on the achievability of economic growth in the agricultural sector proposed by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

The conflict between Fulani herders and Jukun Kona people may affect farming activities and agricultural outputs of Jukun Kona farmers and other farmers around them including the Fulani herdsmen who also engage in subsistence farming. And splitting of traders may affect economic activities at Kasuwan Bera as well as relationship between the Jukun Kona Community and other Muslims residing within the Jukun Kona communities in Ardo-Kola local government area. It is against this background that this study seeks to analyse the conflicts between the Jukun Kona people and Fulani herdsmen and its socio-economic implications.

Conceptual Clarification of Terms:

The Concept of Conflict

Conflict may display the character of mere differences of opinion, disagreement competition, protest or demonstration (Asongo, 2014). Conflict may be more manifested. Consequently, violent demonstration and wars are good illustrations of manifest conflicts. Conflicts whether latent or manifest, arise as a result of scarcity of resources. Individuals and groups enter into conflict relations as they compete to gain control of limited resources. Conflicts stem more from unsatisfied wants (Nwosu & Ofoegbu, 1986). In his view, McKee (1981) cited in Victor, Godwin & Yange (2015) sees conflict as a struggle over values or scarce resources in which two contending groups each seek to impose values or claims on resources over those of the other. To do so, each seeks to maintain or to change the social structure in terms of his or her own interest. Deducting from the various views it's a known fact that conflict is always result from competition over scarce resources in this case, land is the scarce resources. All over Nigeria there is an emphasis on the need for the promotion of agriculture as an alternative to oil as a major source of national revenue. A lot of agricultural programmes are put in place by governmental and non-governmental organisations. Due to this emphasis on agricultural production, many people are going into farming; likewise more people are going into livestock and cattle breeding in particular. The effect of this agricultural surge is that there is a competition for the available land resources between farmers and herdsmen. A dimensional problem arises as cattle do graze on the farmlands of farmers and farmers in retaliation they attack the cows of the herdsmen. The herdsmen go on a reprisal attacks on the farmers largely because they value their cows immensely. So the attacks and reprisal attacks by farmers and herdsmen lead to destruction of lives and properties and also precipitate national disintegration. The consistent feud between the herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria has had devastating effects on the citizens. The effects of this conflict range from wanton destruction of lives and properties to decline in agricultural product which is the major source of sustenance in the nation (Bello, 2013).

The Concept of Socio-Economic

According to Hellmic (2015) the term socio-economic is widely used, even though it is often connoted to quite divergent understanding about what it actually describes. It sometimes appears as an umbrella term for a range of quite successful by diverse and occasionally antagonistic approaches that cannot be easily combined. Weber (1922) describes Socio-Economics as a discipline studying the reciprocal relationship between the economics science on the one hand and social philosophy, ethics and human dignity on the other toward social reconstruction and improvement. Generally socio-economic is the social science that studies how economic activity affects and is shaped by social process. It tends to analyse how societies progress, stagnate or regress because of their interactions.

The persistence and consistency of farmers and herdsman conflicts portends grave socio-economic consequences. Farm products which also serve as Nigerian foreign exchange products are destroyed during attack. These farm products like cash crops add to Nigerians' Gross Domestic Products (GDP) but when these crops are destroyed it leads to depletion of economic growth. Nigeria has not fared well with the incessant attacks on farmers and farm produce by the Fulani herdsmen, at the advent of conflict. On the other hand, cattle rearing have in no small measure contributed to the Nigerian economy. Nigeria is one of the exporters of the beef and similar products which adds to our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) similarly, it can be observed that when farmers' farm products are destroyed by cows, there is always a reprisal attacks on the cow leading to the killing and injuring of hundreds of cows and this immensely declines cow meat production which in turn leads to the depletion of the Nigerian economy (Adisa & Adekunle, 2010).

The social, economic and political tensions created as a result of numerous escalations of violent conflicts have raised fundamental national questions for the survival of the Nigerian State. The failure of the state to manage and resolve such conflicts has put a question mark on the suitability or relevance of the federal structure to the Nigerian reality (Bello, 2013).

The Fulani People

The Fula people, also known as Fulani in Hausa language, are a mass population widely dispersed and culturally diverse in all of Africa, but most predominate in West Africa and Nigeria in particular. The Fulani's generally speak the Fula language and majority of them are Muslims. A significant number of them are nomadic in nature, herding cattle, goats and sheep across the vast dry grass lands of their environment, making them the world's largest pastoral nomadic group. They are massively spread over many countries, and are found mainly in West Africa and northern parts of Central Africa, but also in Sudan and Egypt. The main Fulani sub-groups in Nigeria are: Fulbe Adamawa, Fulbe Mbororo, Fulbe Sokoto, Fulbe Gombe, and the Fulbe Borgu (Eyekpimi, 2016).

There is diverse speculation about the origin of the fulani herdsmen. In the accent Arabic writing, fula people were mentioned too. Anthropologist says that the origin of Fula is connected with Egypt. Some hypotheses state that Fulani is one of the Israeli tribes. Other experts believe that Fula originated from the region of present Northern Senegal. Capturing vast territories, Fulbe managed to create powerful states that even Europeans tried not to touch them for many centuries. Fula proverbs say: "Cattle surpass everything, it's even more important than father and mother" "if cattle die, then fulbe dies". The herdsmen have often come into conflict with local farmers. The clashes also continued in the last several years. Recently the nature of the attacks has changed. It is often contained in news reports that Fulani herders now allegedly use firearms to kill farmers both in their farms and homes (Soriola, 2018).

Herdsmen are owners or keepers of herds of animals like cattle. They usually move their herds from one place to another in search of pasture and fresh water. In Nigeria, it is predominantly the occupation of the Fulani ethnic group. In other words, they own and rear cattle for commercial purposes. According to Idowu (2017), the Fulani (also called Peul or Fulbe) are people of obscure origin that expanded eastward from Futa Toro in Lower Senegal in the 14th century. By 16th and 19th centuries they had established themselves at Macina (upstream of the Niger Bend) and Hausa lands, notably, Adamawa (in the northern Cameroon). Many of the Fulanis continued to maintain pastoral lives; some, however, particularly in Hausa land gave up their nomadic pursuits, settled in existing urban communities and were converted to Islām. This has often made it difficult to differentiate them from the Muslim-Hausas of Nigeria (Adeoye, 2017).

They are concentrated principally in Nigeria, Mali, Guinea, Cameroon, Senegal and Niger. Their indigenous language is known as Fula and it is classified within the Atlantic branch of the Niger-Congo language family. They constitute the fourth-largest ethnic group in Nigeria with an estimated population of over seven million (Burton, 2016).

The Jukun Kona People

The Jukun-Kona addresses people themselves as Jiba and speaks the Jiba dialect. They trace their origin to the Middle East, precisely Yemen. From Yemen, they migrated to Egypt and then to Chad basin where they settled at Ngazargamu (Borno State, Nigeria) with Kanuri people. Tussle for dynastic succession led to their disintegration with the kanuri. This gave rise to their further migrations that brought them to a place by the Benue River called kindong whence to Kuro, Abani Noku, Nakanizang, Funi Shari (Garu), Kannei and finally Kona Garu, Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State. Majority of them are farmers and Christians now after converting from African traditional religion, also majority of the Jukun-Kona people that now spread across villages in Jalingo and Ardo-Kola Local Government Areas of Taraba State are farmers.

The Jukun Kona are friendly people and their socio-cultural and political beliefs have not been adulterated to a considerable extent. They believe that a man's spirit lives on after his death. They also believe in social justice, equity and freedom to all irrespective of gender, age or religion. This unique people have been marginalised and grossly misrepresented and maligned by the Fulani.

Theoretical Framework

This research work adopted the theory of eco-violence as its theoretical perspective in an attempt to explain the socio-economic implications of Fulani herders-Jukun conflict in Ardo-Kola local government area of Taraba state. Eco-violence theory was propounded by Homer-Dixon. The fundamental theoretical assumption of the theory is that resource scarcity is the product of an insufficient supply, too much demand or an unequal distribution of a resource as a result of environmental hazards that forces some sector of a society into a condition of deprivation and violence. These four sources of scarcity are in turn caused by variables such as population growth, economic development, pollution and obviously climate change. Thus, environmental resource scarcity constrains agricultural and economic productivity, further inducing the disruption of economic livelihoods, poverty and migration. Migration can occur either because the environmental quality of a habitat has become unlivable or, more commonly, because the migrant's economic outcome is likely to be better in areas with greater resource availability. Both constrained productivity and migration are likely to strengthen the segmentation around already existing religious, class, ethnic or linguistic cleavages in a society and thus precipitate conflicts (Homer-Dixon & Blitt, 1998).

Implicit in the eco-violence theory is the assumption that competition over scarce ecological resources engenders violent conflict. This trend has been aggravated in contemporary times owing to the impacts of climate change, which has exacerbated ecological scarcity across the world (Blench, 2004; Onuoha, 2007).

In effect, ecological scarcity raises the competitive stakes and premium that the various societal groups may place on available ecological resources. This condition tends to precipitate violent conflicts. Applied to the purpose of the present discourse, the theory of eco-violence offers insights into the nature and dynamics of the herdsman/farmers conflicts in Nigeria. In this regard, it is to be observed that the conflicts have been driven by the desperation of the affected groups to protect and advance their livelihood interests in the context of an ever shrinking ecological space, characterized by resource-scarcity, livelihood crisis, population explosion, and resource competition (Blench, 2004).

As the population is increasing, definitely there will be as well increase in demand for land, water, forest products and grazing land within the territories inhabited by Fulani herdsman and farmers; these groups are forced to find new ways to cope with different types of conflict at once because of competition over marginal resources (Adogi, 2013).

In the case of local government area in Taraba State, which is by design the focus of this paper, land is the scarce resources and the situation has been necessitated by increased in farming activities by the Jukun Kona people and other neighboring communities due to increase in human population. This trend resulted to decrease in grazing fields hence there is competition over ecological resources and resulted to the current conflict between two communities that were living together peacefully for many years.

However, some of the weaknesses of the Eco-violence theory are; it concentrates more on too much demand and an unequal distribution of resources due to environmental hazards and deprivation as the major cause of violence. The Theory did not explain how the conflict resulted to looting of properties and cattle rustling, nevertheless, the theory helps to explain how insufficient supply and too much demand of land resources has led to the communal clash between the Jukun-Kona community who were mostly farmers and the Fulani herdsman who were mostly pastoralist in Jalingo local government area.

Findings

Investigations revealed that the current crisis between the Fulani herdsman and Jukun Kona people started on 6th May 2019 following a misunderstanding between a Fulani youth and a Jukun Kona youth at Yawai village in Abbare maikinta ward in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba state when the herd of cattle controlled by the Fulani youth encroached into Melon farm or egusi farm belonging to the Jukun Kona youth on their way to drink water from stream (Hunkuyi, 2019). There was a physical fight between the two youths and both of them sustained some degrees of injuries and each departed to his residence and on sighting them in their various homes with such injuries, both tribes started mobilising for revenge (S. Umar, Personal Communication, August 16, 2019). Despite the efforts by some of the elders to intervene so that compensation can be paid, the tension was high from both camps to the extent that one Fulani youth followed one Jukun Kona youth to his house and that Fulani youth was killed. From that killing of one youth, killings and burning of houses and properties between the two communities started and the Fulani invited their fighters who assisted them in fighting. The Yawai village is mainly inhabited by the Jukun Kona, Mumuye and the Fulani herdsman but the Fulani only targeted their attacks the Jukun Kona people only but the Jukun Kona in their reprisal attacks killed and burnt houses belonging to the Fulani and other non -Fulani Muslims (M. Mazang, Personal Communication, August 18, 2019).

In one of the reprisal attacks, the Jukun Kona youth blocked the Jalingo- Wukari federal highway at Nukkai, Kofai and Kasuwan Bera in Ardo-Kola local government area where they burnt many cars and tricycles belonging to innocent commuters plying the road. Similarly the Jukun Kona youths looted and burnt shops at kasuwan Bera and also burnt mosques at Kasuwan Bera and Nukkai market which makes the conflict to take another dimension to religious crisis as Muslims houses at Kasuwan Bera and Todiri village in Ardo-Kola local government area were also burnt down (J. Haruna, Personal Communication, August 15, 2019).

Taraba State is predominantly agrarian and agriculture is perhaps, the main occupation of the people of the state. The Jukun Kona are farmers and fishermen and because of their farming activities, the recent conflicts led to several attacks in some of their villages located in Jalingo and Ardo-Kola Local Government Areas of Taraba State were as a result of destruction of melon farmland by Fulani herders' with their cattle in which all efforts to resolve the issue amicably failed. Hence the killings and burning of properties between the two ethnic group as well as reprisal attacks on innocent commuters along Jalingo – Wukari federal highway by the angry Jukun Kona youths.

The unfortunate incident also resulted to looting and burning of shops and mosques at Kasuwan Bera; popular market at Kofai near Taraba State University and Nukkai. Many traders mostly Muslims relocated their shops and stalls from Kasuwan Bera to Jauro Ganah Market all in Ardo- Kola L.G.A of Taraba state and change the Jauro Ganah market to be the same day with Kasuwan Bera (G. Usman, Personal Communication, August 18 2019).

In reaction to the burning of Mosques and other Muslims shops, a group of traders mostly Muslims relocated their shops and stalls to Jauro Ganah market along new Central Bank of Nigeria road and change the market days from Wednesdays and Saturdays to Mondays and Fridays just as Kasuwan Bera (G. Usman and S. Grace, Personal Communication, August 18, 2019).

The Fulani herdsmen hired fighters usually on Boxer motorcycles did not also ended their attacks in Yawai village only but also spread across many Jukun Kona villages which includes:- Murkunu, Murtia, Yaukani, Murbai, Sompore, Jekunhou, Sembe, Ndayara, Kaudad, Keshabro, Jannabambu, and Sobai in Jalingo and Ardo-Kola Local Government Areas of Taraba State (D. Nomiri, Personal Communication, August 17, 2019).

Although silence killings is still ongoing between the two communities, many lives were lost, many houses burnt, many animals killed, and farmlands and villages were deserted by both Fulani and Jukun Kona communities across Jalingo and Ardo-Kola Local Government Areas. There are also cases of rustling of animals and farm produce by some Jukun Kona Youths who took advantage of the crisis to perpetuate their evil intentions (A. Usman and I. Julde, Personal Communication, August 15, 2019).

It was also reported that 51 people were killed while 3 vehicles, 3 tricycles, 2 motorcycles and 2 Mosques were burnt down completely (Okoroafor, 2019). similarly, 19,100 people were displaced and spread across 5 internally displaced Persons camps at Nukkai, Kofai, Gullum, Kona Garo and Muslim council secretariat and 15 persons were injured (Nigerian Red Cross Society, Taraba State Branch, 2019). Also 29 shops were looted and burnt down at Kasuwan Bera (A. Rabi, Personal Communication, January 01 2020).

Several attempts by the elders of the Fulani and Jukun Kona to end the crisis completely proved abortive. Recently, the Honourable member Taraba State House of assembly representing Ardo-Kola state constituency Hon. Dominic Bukuni who is also Jukun Kona called for the re-building of the burnt Mosque at Kasuwan Bera but in the process of re-building the mosque, the angry Jukun Kona youths went and demolished the new building which is an indication that tension is still high because silence killings are still ongoing in the crisis affected areas. As a result of the crisis both Fulani herdsmen and Jukun Kona communities have deserted their farms and villages and took refuge in Kofai, Nukkai and Jalingo town due to fear of the unknown (C. Bakari & E. Dauda, Personal Communication, August 20, 2019).

Conclusion

This study attempted to investigate the conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and Jukun Kona communities in Ardo-Kola Local Government Areas of Taraba state, Nigeria. which has claimed 51 lives in Taraba State. The main reason for the clashes was due to increase in farming activities which resulted to decrease in grazing areas that led to the conflict. It is also clear that cattle routes across the state have been taken over by farming activities that led to encroachment of farmlands by animals, the crisis also affected farming and economic activities at Kasuwan Bera as some youth took advantage of the crisis to rustle animals and steal properties before burning some shops.

It was also observed that the conflict could have been managed to forestall its escalation to a crisis level if the parties were patient. It was also found out that security personnel were not proactive in managing the crisis that was why there were series of attacks and reprisal attacks without any reasonable arrest by the security agencies because the attackers normally came attack and fled without being caught. It was also established that the conflict which was initially communal have become religious with series of attacks on Muslims and burning of Mosques at Kasuwan Bera and Nukkai in Ardo-Kola and Jalingo Local Government Areas respectively which led to the splitting of Kasuwan Bera. Some of the Fulani herders' attackers are not resident in those areas but came in solidarity and assisted their kinsmen in fighting and they only attacked Jukun Kona people but the Jukun Kona youths

attacked both Fulani herdsmen and other non- Fulani Muslims and it has affected the relationship of the Jukun Kona people and neighboring Muslim communities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from this work, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

- i. Amicable arrangements should be devised between both parties for settling disputes
- ii. Government should make efforts to demarcate cattle routes and grazing area through strong legislation.
- iii. Traditional rulers and Community leaders need to be involved to serve as mediators between both parties in terms of misunderstanding.
- iv. There is need for increase interaction between the traditional leaders of the farming communities and nomads to reduce this menace.
- v. Farmers and Fulani herdsmen should be ordered by government to surrender the guns and live ammunition in their possession to government.
- vi. There is need for seasonal conferences at the local and state government level that would encourage dialogue and understanding by farmers, cattle herders and government.
- vii. The security agents need to be proactive in managing conflict and prosecute anyone that is being arrested during any conflict. Reprisal attacks on innocent people should be discouraged by the community leaders.

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