



Impact of Herdsmen Activities on Residents of Oke-Ako in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the impact of herdsmen activities on residents of Oke-Ako in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study employed descriptive research design of survey type. The population consisted of all residents of Oke-Ako community in Ikole Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The sample consisted of 120 respondents who are farmers from the community using snowball sampling procedure. A questionnaire tagged 'Impact of Herdsmen Activities' was used to collect data. Validity of the instrument was determined by experts in Social Studies Education and Test, Measurement and Evaluation. Reliability of the questionnaire was determined through test-retest method and 0.75 reliability coefficient was obtained. Descriptive statistics such as mean and percentages were used to answer the research question while Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that there is no significant relationship between output of farm produce and herdsmen activities but there is a significant relationship between displacement of the residents and herdsmen activities in the community. It was therefore recommended that a meeting between representatives of the host community and Fulani herdsmen should be conveyed under a public forum where both parties would be involved in decision making as well as permitted to take part actively in the planning procedures in restoring peace to the community. Government should ensure adequate security of the residents in order to prevent herdsmen from harassing the people.

Keywords: Impact, Herdsmen, Farming activities, Residents, Community

Introduction

The frequent attacks on the farmers and citizens of Nigeria these days by the herdsmen seem to be terribly alarming. The herdsmen were usually to wreak havoc in certain communities in Nigeria, but in recent times, it seems the rate at which they are committing these crimes has increased exponentially. This threatens the peace, security and unity of the nation as one geographical entity and seems

retarding the growth and development of all spheres of peoples' lives in Nigeria especially the farmers.

The conflict between farmers and herdsmen has been a common feature of economic livelihood in Nigeria. In the period before the beginning of the 20th century, the problem was observed to be mainly restricted to some states in Nigeria. Cattle rearing seemed to be mainly prevalent in the Northern parts



of Nigeria where crop production was carried out only during the short rainy season on a small scale. This gave the herders access to a vast area of grass land. As time went on, and with the introduction of irrigated farming in the Savanna belt of Nigeria, and the increased weathering of pasture during the dry season, less pasture seemed to be available to cattle herders. Therefore, the herdsmen were usually moving southward to the coastal zone where the rainy season is longer and the soil retains moisture for long, in search of pasture and water. This gives rise to an increased pressure on natural resources and a stiff competition for available resources between farmers and herders on the farm land.

Destruction of farmers' crops by cattle and other property by the pastoralists such as, burning of rangelands, Fadama, blockage of stock routes and water points through crop encroachment seems to be major direct reasons cited by the pastoralists as the main causes for conflicts. The threat to human security occasioned by these conflicts is quite real. Indeed, Fayinka and Fabusoso (2017) showed 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 Savannah areas where intensive and extensive crop production activities are particularly predominant around the flood plains. The implication of all these may put question marks on the achievability of the growth rate in the agricultural sector as proposed by the

federal government of Nigeria especially in Ekiti State where people engage in farming.

It was observed that Nigeria has witnessed various communal clashes arising from the activities of the nomads through open grazing. The herdsmen seem to be moving about on daily basis with their cattle in search for grassland for their animals. They perceived to be on the streets in most of the cities and found operating in the remotest villages in the State. Based on this, it seems that the effects of the herdsmen's activities cannot be gloss-over in Ekiti State. This is because of the perceived negative effect it has on socio-economic lives of residents of Oke-Ako in Ekiti State. The herdsmen crises sometimes usually lead to destruction of lives and properties. It is observed that whenever herdsmen carry out an attack, people are killed in tens and hundreds, property worth hundreds of naira is destroyed. For instance, Guardian Newspaper (2016) reported that two people were killed and six other residents of Oke-Ako community were injured by suspected cattle herders for allegedly refusing them the use of their farmland for grazing. During the pastoral attacks, people were killed or maimed. Those who are maimed may no longer be able to do what they hitherto did themselves because of impairment. This problem may resort to financial incapability since the residents of the community majorly engage in farming as a means of livelihood, thereby affecting their economic stability. Observation of the researcher revealed that some of the



farmers in the community embarked on agricultural loans either short or long term loans in order to go about their yearly agricultural plantation. There seems to be low outputs of farm produce as a result of series of attacks by the herdsmen within their community. Beetseh and Akpoo (2014) stated that, war no doubt increases the number of physically challenged people in the society because of the use of offensive weapons during an attack or riots that give people deep cuts and all forms of deformities.

At times there seems to be a restriction of movement or declaration of state of emergency in such a community. Most times when there is an attack, people's movements are restricted. In some cases the government may decide to declare hours of curfew or a dawn to dusk curfew. This is an infringement on the statutory freedom of movement of the people. In view of the researcher's observation, residents of Oke Ako Ekiti in Ikole Local Government Area, Ekiti State recently raised an alarm over destruction of their farms by suspected Fulani herdsmen. It was perceived that some herdsmen had attacked in Oke Ako in May, 2016, killing two persons and injuring several others in a night raid. The residents accused the herdsmen of grazing beyond the time stipulated by the state government. The then Governor, Ayodele Fayose had, on August 29, 2016, signed a bill concerning grazing activities into law. The law provides that any farm produce destroyed by the activities of

herdsmen between 6am and 6pm, shall be estimated by agricultural officers and the expenses of the estimate shall be borne by the culprits. However, it was observed that after paying compensation for destroyed crops, the herdsmen returned to the same farm to destroy the remaining crops.

It is an indisputable fact that the perceived activities of the Fulani herdsmen against the farmers seems to have resulted in a huge economic setback in Oke-Ako. From the researcher's observation, any moment, anytime farmers are attacked, they run away from their farm settlement or villages and find it difficult to return for fear of another attack by the so called herdsmen. This sometimes lasts for a long time, thereby hindering sowing and reaping. This perceived factor undoubtedly creates an artificial scarcity of food (farm outputs). Inflation and devaluation of the naira in the community due to the little availability of food resources within the community compare with the money at hand chasing limited goods in term of food. Anyanwuocha (2016) sees that the money is devalued because much money is now chasing few goods and services. The money cannot buy as much quantity as it could before. There seems to be decrease in output per farm produce, because of restriction on people's movement and destruction of farm crops by the herdsmen attack. People can no longer move to their farms easily because of attack they experience in the farm from time to time. Ebele and Emmanuel (2017) observed that the overall output



of the people decreased because of the rate at which the cattle eat up crops as well as the attack and check placed on the people.

Observation revealed that people are displaced anytime there is any serious attack on the community, houses are burnt down and people are rendered homeless. Consequently, some of them who are not well-to-do cannot easily find themselves a home and therefore they are quartered in public buildings within the community as internally displaced people. Okoli and Eze (2017) observed that war created refugees and large numbers of people are displaced, which is known as internally displaced people. People are displaced from their houses as result of arson by the herdsmen and eventually camp in public buildings. It was equally observed that there have been several cases of farmers-herdsmen conflicts across various communities. These conflicts have now become so threatening on the community unity and country's national integration, such that the hitherto peaceful relationship between farmers and herdsmen across various parts of Nigeria is degenerating to a carnage level, leading to loss of lives and properties. Attempts by the Federal Government to curb the incessant farmers-herdsmen appear to be futile. Mwanfupe (2015) noted that, "unless security of tenure on land used by smallholders (both farmers and herdsmen) is restored, the conflicts between them will continue". He equally recounts that a similar occurrence of farmers-herdsmen

conflicts is witnessed in South West, Nigeria which made state to suggest government roles in the management of the conflicts. It was suggested that state should engage in mediatory role between the conflicting parties so as to resolve the conflicts. Furthermore, they should employ political frameworks such as right policy formulation on habitants and budget allocation, so as to cater for the land and amenities needs of both rural and urban settlers. It is obvious that the conflict of herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria usually lead to displacement.

Research Question

The study answered this question:

1. What is the impact of open grazing on farm produce in Oke-Ako community?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between output of farm produce and herdsmen activities in Oke-Ako.
2. There is no significant relationship between displacement of farmers and herdsmen activities in Oke-Ako.

Research Method

The study employed descriptive research design of survey type. This was deemed appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain the opinion of the representative sample of the target population. The population of the study consisted of all residents of Oke-Ako community in Ikole Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The sample consisted of 120 respondents



who are farmers from the community using snowball sampling technique.

A questionnaire tagged Impact of Herdsmen Activities on Residents of Oke-Ako in Ekiti State, Nigeria was used to collect data for the study. The validity of the items in the instrument was determined by experts in Social Studies Education and Test, Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined by administering the items twice on twenty farmers from Ayedun

community in Ekiti State who were not part /of the sample of this study. The data obtained from the two tests were correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and 0.75 was obtained meaning that the instrument was reliable and this was high enough for the study. Descriptive statistics such as mean and percentages were used to answer the research question raised for this study while Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question: What is the impact of open grazing on farm products in Oke-Ako community?

Table 1: Percentage Analysis of the impact of open grazing on farm produce in Oke-Ako community

S/N	ITEMS	A	%	D	%
1.	Open confrontation results in rural insecurity.	90	75	30	25
2.	Harassment of nomads by host youths	75	62.5	45	37.5
3.	Indiscriminate defecation by cattle on roads	98	81.7	22	18.3
4.	Open grazing brings about low farmers output	102	85	18	15
5.	Farmers inflict physical injuries on the cattle by using cutlass	10	8.3	110	91.7
6.	Open grazing make people to feel unsecured	90	75	30	25

Table 1 showed that low farmers output was believed to be one of the effect of open grazing on farm product in Oke-Ako community as perceived by 102 (85%) of the respondents. Another impact of open grazing on farm produce in Oke Ako community was indiscriminate defecation by cattle on roads as agreed by 98 (81.7%) respondents. Also, 90 (75%) of the respondents agreed on open confrontation which results in rural insecurity as well as open grazing that make people to feel unsecured.

Harassment of nomads by host youths was believed by 75 (62.5%) to be another impact of open grazing on farm produce in the community. However, 110 (91.7%) of the respondents disagreed that farmers inflict physical injuries on cattle by using cutlass.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between output of farm produce and herdsmen activities in Oke-Ako

**Table 2:** Relationship between output of farm produce and herdsmen activities

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	df	r _{cal}	r _{tab}
Farm produce	120	15.689	13.662	118	0.375	0.417
Herdsmen activities	120	11.520	10.813			

$P < 0.05$ (Result-Not Significant)

Table 2 showed that the r_{cal} (0.375) is less than r_{tab} (0.417) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is not rejected, this implies that there is no significance relationship between output of farm produce and herdsmen

activities in Oke-Ako community.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between displacement of farmers and herdsmen activities in Oke-Ako

Table 3: Correlation Analysis of the relationship between displacement of farmers and herdsmen activities in Oke-Ako

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	r _{cal}	r _{tab}
Displacement of farmers	120	13.65	9.711	118	0.450*	0.417
Herdsmen activities	120	11.520	10.813			

$P > 0.05$ (Result-Significant)

Table 3 showed that the r_{cal} (0.450) is greater than r_{tab} (0.417) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is not accepted, this implies that there is a significance relationship between displaced and herdsmen activities in Oke-Ako community.

Discussion

The results of the research question revealed that rural insecurity, harassment of nomads, indiscriminate defecation by cattle on roads, low farmers output and open grazing resulting to people unsecured had higher percentages of respondents. The finding was in agreement with the view of Beetseh and Akpoo (2014) who stated that, war no doubt increases the number of physically challenged people in the society because of the use

of offensive weapons during an attack or riots that give people deep cuts and all forms or deformities.

The result of the study showed that there is no significant relationship between output of farm produce and herdsmen activities in Oke-Ako community. The finding is in contrast to the finding of Ebele and Emmanuel (2017) that says the overall outputs of the people was decreased because of the attack on the people.

This study also revealed that there is a relationship between displacement and herdsmen activities in Oke-Ako community. This finding corroborates the assertion of Okoli and Eze (2017) who observed that war created refugees and large numbers of people



are displaced, which is known as internally displaced people. People are displaced from their houses as result of arson by the Fulani herdsmen and eventually camp in public buildings.

Conclusion

The study concluded that herdsmen and farmers clash in Oke-Ako usually leads to displacement and decrease in farm output because of the restrictions on people's movement to farms as a result of herdsmen attack in the community'

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is therefore recommended that:

i. Meeting between representatives of the host community and herdsmen should be conveyed under a public forum where both parties would be involved in decision making as well as permitted to take part actively in the planning procedures in allowing harmony and peaceful co-existence in the community.

Government should ensure adequate security of the residents in order to prevent herdsmen from harassing the people of the community.

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