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## AN EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION ON THE EFFECT OF CONFLICTS ON FOOD SECURITY IN BENUE STATE

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### ABSTRACT

Conflicts have been since the beginning of human existence. In Nigeria conflicts have existed since the existence of human relations conflicts must come to play since human interaction is a continuous process. In Benue State the usual peace that hitherto existed is a situation of the past. Conflicts are affecting human existence negatively. The research study has Benue State, North Central Nigeria its main area of study using primary data, empirically the study tries to find out the nature of conflicts that exists in Benue State, determine factors responsible for these conflicts and to find out what effects these conflicts have on food security. The study reveals that the major type of conflicts that exist in Benue State is conflict of land by the Benue Farmers and Herders. The study also reveals that these conflicts have affected the production of food negatively. Among other recommendations the research study recommends proper demarcation and enforcement of boundaries. Orientation and re-orientation of citizens to enable them know and understand the effects of these conflicts on human existence.

**KEYWORDS:** Conflict, Foodsecurity, Benue State, Nigeria.

### INTRODUCTION

A major challenge that affects most countries and Nigeria inclusive is the rising level of conflicts which have several forms. These conflicts ranges from communal, ethno religious,

political just to mention a few. Conflicts are an integral part of daily living and human relationships, conflicts take place in society as a result of several factors. In most cases, it is hard to point out the reason for having orderliness in society it is also difficult to give reasons for the emergence escalation or protraction of conflicts in society as some conflicts generate and become inimical to society . [Faleti, S.A, 2006] Nation States, Nigeria inclusive have failed in the capacity for social provision. Consequently, the interplay of economic crisis, social upheaval and political instability characterized by most African Nations has exposed the inadequacies of African states like Nigeria and exacerbated the economic conditions of the people further pushing them into desperation where by social and political misunderstanding quickly degenerate into avoidable conflicts. [Nabudere, D.W 2000]. The search for food security starts at a small level but requires a complex undertaking sustained and demanding efforts at various levels of medium and long terms not just to produce more food, but to create adequate entitlement for those who need food. The search for food security also requires mobilization potentials of those engaged in food production and moving from a up down model to a modified approach to food security [ Agishi, T, 2016]. Conflicts occur since society is made up of people with different interest and values. Modernization which has brought about in recognition of the fertile land and green pastures that characterize the arable green vegetation of the Benue valley, clashes of interest are expected especially with the increase in Nigerian population and obvious ecological factors. [Yusuf A. A, ETAL, 2020]. Such conflicts as they occur are bound to affect human existence in one or several ways against this backdrop lays the foundation of this research paper.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To observe the nature of Conflicts in Benue State.
2. To determine the Factors responsible for Conflicts in Benue State.
3. To observe the effects of Conflicts on Food Security in Benue State.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided the study are

1. What Are the Nature of Conflicts in Benue State?
2. What Factors are responsible for Conflicts in Benue State?
3. What Are the Effects of these Conflicts on Food Security in Benue State?

## **AN OVERVIEW OF CONFLICTS THAT EXISTS IN BENUE STATE AND NIGERIA (IN BRIEF)**

Farmer – Herder Conflicts Nomads whose major occupation is the rearing of cattle, they move from one geographical area to the other in search of pastures for their cattle and in the process these cattle graze on farmers farmland thereby leading to conflicts as the farmers fight ownership of their land while the herders cattle feed on these crops struggle for ownership and superiority generate conflicts.

**Ethno-Religious Conflicts:** The Relationship between one ethnic or religious group and sect goes sour. Nigeria generally being a multicultural country with several religious believers has a breeding ground for ethno religious conflicts.

**Communal Conflicts:** This kind of Conflict takes place between communities of the same religion and culture who earlier shared common ideologically heritage but unforeseen issues and in compatibility has led to conflict by unresolvable differences.

**Land Conflicts:** Land is ancestral and has a lot of importance attached to it. Land matters in Nigeria are not treated lightly. Land is inherited from generation passed on to the next generation and with the importance attached to land for agriculture purposes like farming and rearing of animals conflicts are bound to emerge ethnic by land trespass or out rightly boundary disputes.

**Politically Related Conflicts:** with the advent of democracy, brings to the front burner political activities in which some certain groups may feel either alienated, marginalized or oppressed during the struggle for political power. This eventually leads to political conflicts (Albert, I. O, 2000). Land has always been important in Tivland as it remains one of the major means of production. In pre-colonial Tiv, land was communally owned. A little encroachment on land leads to conflicts. (Bur, A, 2000)

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK**

### **FOOD SECURITY**

Food security is the ability of individual and households to have access to food, this entails having physical and economic access to good food. (Ohaji, 2016) to the F.A.O. (2003) there is food security when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe food to maintain their dietary requirements. To the World Health Organization W. H.O. (1996) three basic areas of food security include food availability, food access and food use. Food availability, having available sufficient quantities of food on a consistent basis both physical and economically, while food use is the knowledge of preparing a nutritional

diet Raman, A (2010) observes that food security encompasses access to availability of food, distribution of resources to produce food and the ability to purchase food when the need arises, he notes that one should be able to buy food even when one cannot produce. As food security is defined in terms of either food self-sufficiency or reliance. Food sufficiency is the provision of adequate domestic production to meet a great part of consumption required, ruling out importation of food. As a source while self-reliance implies source of food being determined by patterns of trade internationally, (F. A. O.2018) Adegbola, etal 2011) in their submission observe that government has an active role towards provision of infrastructure for achieving food security, food production and provision of access roads for the distribution, finance and price control forwards ensuring affordability of food on a wide scale.

## CONFLICT

Conflict as a term is a generic words used in latin to connote disagreement, misunderstanding, fight, confrontation between two or more individual, groups or parties that are aspiring towards , incompatible, or competitive ends or means (Wallenstein, P. 2002)

Conflict is a situation that arises from misunderstanding or clash of interest either by individual or group interaction. Since societies are interwoven and humans must interact with one another, conflict becomes an unavoidable aspect of humans existence. What comes to the fore, is reason for existence of conflicts and mechanism to which they are handled to reduce and if possible eradicate further occurrences. Several scholars believe conflict is an inevitable aspects of society as it occurs even in the best of human societies. [Aliede, J etal [2020] To Anyo, T.S [2004]conflicts exists in a monolithic social order but are more pronounced in a plural society that have conflicting interests, perceptions and attitudes to situations by the different groups tend to promote and in most cases generate conflicts and misunderstanding

Conflicts in Benue state which exists in several local governments have become violent due to freshness of the grass in the Benue area, and the uncoordinated movement of the cattle by herders as all of them are desperate to protect and control arable land. Population explosion, climate change, and global warming are also contributory factors the several conflicts. In furtherance to this Imobighe [2004] observes that conflict represents disharmony, antagonism, hostility and anger in relationship between, which may arise as a result of incompatibility of pursued goals, or incompatibility of the materials and methods used in pursuing such goals. [O. Godowoli, A [2002] in his submission divides conflicts into functional and dysfunctional types. He notes that conflictual are functional or constructive

when they tend to improve the quality of decisions being made, stimulates creativity, and innovation which aids in problem solving and have positive influence on the environment while conflicts become dysfunctional or destructive when such conflicts bring a system to a halt and threaten the survival of individuals and groups in society groups and government , and groups between individuals, causes of such interaction, method of such interaction and consequences of such of interaction can bring about feelings of tensions, fear, insecurity and eventually lead to conflict [Oguaye. M [1995]. It is important to note that human beings compete for control, ownership and usage of existing scarce resources, conflict thereby remains one of the only ways of expressing their divergent views through instruments of violence. [Ukase P. etal, 2018].

### **THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK**

Dialectical Materialism was postulated by Marx and Engels, materialism involves treating issues as though they are dependent on the mind and spirit. The theory has basis for reasoning and reasoning affects decisions as outcomes are a result of decisions. Philosophically reality is defined through material reality. Material means what man owns and possesses in society, man's belonging in society. Since materials are scarce and limited as man aspires to possess these scarce resources conflicts arise in the process. This theory calls competition for these dialectics. The proponents of this theory believe that equity and justice are a necessary prerequisite for progress and development. Threats exists in the cause of survival of both herders in the struggle more materials conditions which eventually escalates to conflicts.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study employed survey design and this research was conducted in Benue State, North Central Nigeria. The population of the study was made up of four local governments selected purposive namely Logo local government from Zone A, Guma local government from Zone B, and Agatu local government from Zone C., Makurdi local government areas was included since it is the state capital. The chosen local government has similarities as they are all prone to farmer herder and general conflicts. A general sampling of sharing of 100 structured questionnaires were administered per local government. Primary data was used. A fair sharing equally of 100 structured questionnaires was administered per local government sharing a total of 400 hundred questionnaires. The respondents were of the age 18 and above since that is the officially approved voting age of Nigerians. From the 400 questionnaires that were administered 381 were filled properly and returned, making it a success rate of 80%.

The data collected for the study was analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) the data was presented using frequency distribution table good expressed using simple percentages

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

**Table 1 Nature of Conflicts in Benue State.**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Farmer Header Conflict	194	50.9
Ethno Religious Conflict	98	25.7
Ethnic Conflict	64	16.8
Others	25	6.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 above concerning nature of conflicts in Benue is 194 representing 50.9% are farmer header conflicts 98 representing 25.7% are Ethno – religious conflicts, 64 representing 16.8% are Ethnic Conflicts, while other Conflicts in general are 25 representing by 6.6%. This reveals that the major conflicts existing in Benue State is the farmer header conflict.

This goes in line with the research findings of Ter Wanan T. (2016) who in his submission notes that conflicts between pastoralist and farmers have existed since the beginning of agriculture and has increased in intensity due to increase herd size, improved condition of cattle which has led pastoralist to seek for more pastures beyond their limited range.

Further buttressing this, Uker and Orkar (2019) in their submission observe that Nigeria has been faced with serious herders and farmer’s tussles over the tears in states predominantly including Benue, Nasarawa, Kaduna, Plateau, Kogi and Taraba States which have eventually risen to conflict status and concern to society. Also, Oseni (2014) reports that since 2001 Tiv people and Fulani herdsman of Benue State and Nasarawa State respectively have had several conflicts over the struggle and ownership and access to land in communities causing great damages to both communities and other environs.

### RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

**Table 2 Research question two factors Responsible for Communal Conflicts.**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Land Disputes	171	44.9%
Religious Differences	43	11.3
Chieftaincy Struggles	28	7.3
Exploitation, Oppression And Domination or Majority Ethnic Groups to Minority Groups	37	9.7
Struggle for Natural / Scarce Resource	102	28.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 above reveals that 171 respondents representing 44.9% of the respondents' vein land disputes as the cause of conflicts in Benue State. 43 respondents representing 11.3% believe that religious differences are the cause of conflicts in Benue State. 28 respondents representing by 7.3% believe that chieftaincy struggles are the causes of conflict in Benue state. 37 respondents representing 9.7% believe that the causes of conflict in Benue are due to chieftaincy struggles. 37 respondents represented by 9.7%, view exploitation and oppression by majority ethnic groups to minority groups as the cause of conflicts in Benue state. While 102 respondents represented by 26.8% are of the view that the struggle for land and scarce resource are the reason for conflicts in Benue state. The above reveals that majority of respondents believe that land disputes and the struggles for scarce resources are the major factors responsible for conflicts in Benue State .this result goes in line with the findings of WananT, [2016] Who observes that climate change and population increase has put pressure on already scarce land thereby making both farmers and herders engage in fierce struggle for scarce valuable land resources which degenerates into violence leading to conflict. In the same vein[Abbas, I, 2000] notes that conflict between the Fulani pastoralist and farmers in Nigeria are very intense as social and economic factors continue to provoke violent conflicts between the Fulani pastoralist and farmers. He further notes that as conflicts between the two concerning access rights to farmlands on one side and cattle grazing routes on the other have become very ambiguities and seem to be defying solution.

**RESEARCH QUESTION THREE**

**Table 3: Effects of conflicts on food security.**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Abandonment / Loss of Land	71	18.6
Food Shortage, Scarcity and Unavailability	105	27.6
Destruction of Farm Crops / Environmental Degradation	51	13.4
Food Scarcity / Food Price	35	9.2
Food Instability	92	24.1
Malnutrition	27	7.1
Total	381	100

The data on table 3 above reveals that 71 respondents represented by 18.6% believe that conflicts lead to abandonment and loss of farmland.105 the respondent represented by 27.6% believe that conflicts lead to food shortage and unavailability. 51 respondent represented by 13.4% believe that conflicts effects are destruction of farm crops and environmental degradation. 35 respondents represented by 9.2% believe that conflicts lead to food scarcity

and price hike while 27 respondents represented by 7.1% believe that conflict leads to malnutrition.

The findings above reveals that conflicts leads to abandonment and loss of land, which in turns leads food shortage and unavailability of food.

This result and findings goes with the research findings of Uker and Orkar[2019]who assert that with the conflicts households access to food has reduced, food insufficiency is promoted while nutritional food insecurity is on the rise thereby affecting not only the welfare of the farmers but those who rely on food supplies from the interior. Also in their submission Yesufu A etal[2020] note that the incessant conflicts among farmers and herders has threats to prospects of food security as Benue is known as the food basket state, further implying that these conflicts affect food availability, accessibility and break the food supply chain affecting food supply in not only Benue state but by implication Nigeria as a whole

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusions**

This research study set out to observe and access the nature of conflicts in Benue State, determine the factures responsible for conflicts in Benue State, and find out what effects these conflicts have in food security in Benue State. As mention, the main study area was Benue State, Nigeria; findings from the study reveal that the nature of conflicts that exists in Benue State are farmer herder conflicts, the study also reveals that land disputes and the struggle for scare land resources are the major factors responsible for conflicts in Benue State. The study also reveals that these conflicts have led to the abandonment and loss of land and farm lands which has led to food shortage, food scarcity and food unavailability which has affected food security in Benue State and by implication has affected; food security in Nigeria since Benue State is known as an agrarian state and also the food the food basket state.

### **Recommendations**

With the above results from the research study the recommendations below are made.

1. There should be proper demarcations of boundaries between communities and measures put in place to make secure such boundaries are strictly observed,
2. Proper Security should be drafted to areas experiencing conflicts with serious supervision to maintain law and order, without bias.

3. Traditional Institutions in areas experiencing conflicts should dialogue and encourage their subjects on the need for peaceful co-existence and religious tolerance.
4. The National Orientation Agency and other public enlightenment commissions should give proper orientation to the public especially about conflicts and the practical consequences.
5. Governments of conflicts prone areas should set up peace and reconciliation committees and commissions as the case may be at all tiers of government, to encourage peace building and reconciliation.

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