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**INFLUENCE OF FARMERS AND HERDERS' CLASHES ON PSYCHO-SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study investigated influence of farmers and herders' clashes on psycho-social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria; implications for counselling. The study determined the influence of farmers and herders' clashes on psychological well-being and social well-being of University students in the study area. Two specific objectives with corresponding research questions guided the study. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance for the study. The study adopted survey research design. Undergraduates formed the population of the study. A total of four hundred (400) undergraduates were sampled from a population of one hundred and ninety-eight thousand, eighty-six (198,086) undergraduates of Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria using Taro-Yamen's formula. A multi-stage sampling procedure which included purposive or judgmental sampling technique, proportionate stratified random sampling technique, and ballot simple random sampling technique were used at different stages in the study. A questionnaire structured by the researcher titled "Influence of Farmers and Herders' Clashes on Psycho-Social Well-Being of University Students" (IFHCPSWBUS) was used for data collection. An overall instrument reliability coefficient of .88 was obtained using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient in determining the internal consistency of the items. Descriptive statistics involving mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the inferential statistics of chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) goodness of fit was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed that farmers and herders' clashes

have significant influence on psycho-social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria. The study concluded that farmers and herders' clashes influence the psycho-social well-being of university students in North Central Nigeria. It proffers three counselling implications and strategies or approaches to improve psycho-social well-being of university students in North Central Nigeria. They include trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy (TF-CBT), narrative therapy, and facilitating support groups for the students. Finally, the recommendations among others include prioritize effective educational policies for safe learning environments; mental health services; long-term peace initiatives on the farmer and herders' clashes and support of victims of security challenges

## **INTRODUCTION**

Security is crucial for overall well-being of university students on campus. The main aim of security according to Tari in Ekpo, Edet and Ukpogong (2020) is to ensure safety and security of staff, students and visitors, protecting the property and assets of the University, investigating and detecting crime, reducing incidence of reported crimes and the apprehension and prosecution of offenders. The security of university students is essential to ensure their academic success, mental health, social integration, and overall development during their stay in the university. Recent happenings have shown that University environments are no longer so safe for both students and staff due to threatening farmers and herders' clashes which emanates from Universities host communities. This has become a national discourse that has risen a serious concern for citizens particularly University students because of security situations of universities' host communities. This is why, with the idea of Abraham Maslow, Adamu (2019) stated that an unsecured person perceives the world as a life-threatening jungle, feels unsafe, unhappy, rejected, hostile, and pessimistic, shows a sign of tension, conflict and guilt, and tends to be neurotic and generally egocentric. Prevailing peace or conflict within the Universities and communities around the Universities may have ripple effects on the teaching and learning activities of such Universities coupled with psycho-social well-being of the students. For example, North Central Nigeria which is the host to many Universities is currently facing a lot of challenges like farmers and herders' clashes, communal clashes, bandits' activities, ethno-religious violence to mention but a few. These challenges especially farmers and herders' clashes may have significant implications on psycho-social well-being of university students and can impact on their overall academic environments and quality of life in and around the campuses.

Farmers and herders' clashes are conflicts occurring between peasant farmers or subsistence cultivators and nomadic or transhumant live-stock keepers (Okoro, 2018; Hussein *et al.* in Opoku, 2015). In the same vein, farmers and herders' clashes are referred to ongoing conflicts between Fulani herdsmen (nomadic pastoralists) and farmers in various parts of Nigeria and other countries in West Africa <https://www.bbc.c/world-africa-37021044>. For Amao, Adeagbo, Olojede, Ogunleye, and Ogundoyin (2018), farmers and herders' clashes have remained the most preponderant resource-use conflict in Nigeria. This conflict had led to damage of crops, attacks on cattle, destruction of properties, killings of people and cattle rustling. Obadare (2022) maintained that the clashes have resulted in numerous deaths, injuries, and displacements, and further exacerbated ethnic and religious tensions in affected communities. Opoku (2015) noted farmers and herders clashes as comprising different types of conflicts, including ethnic conflicts, interest conflicts, resource disputes, political action, evictions, killings, cattle raiding and cattle rustling. For Gursoy (2020) farmers and herdsmen clashes are the conflicts between nomadic pastoralist and sedentary farmer communities which have cause thousands of lives and economic loses. Farmers and herders' clashes can therefore, be regarded as the interaction between the farmers and herders in which they engage in mutually opposing actions and use coercive behaviour to destroy, injure and even kill their opponents.

Yusufu and Ilevbare (2021) asserted that Nigeria's North-Central Region (especially States such as Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau) are not immune against farmers and herders' clashes as the zone has degenerated into a theatre of full-blown war between indigenous settled crop farmers and nomadic cattle herders. Farmers and herdsmen clashes over land ownership have been a contentious and perennial problem in the North Central region, making legal protection against conflict over landownership imperative. Landownership is often the primary cause of conflict and the struggle for its control engages people at all rungs of society (Fisiy, 2012). Scholars pointed out that factors such as climate change, population increase, and expansion in agricultural production, socio-cultural and religious differences, infrastructure construction (for example dam projects), poor governance, cattle theft, Boko Haran insurgency, changes in policies and among others are generally considered remote causes and reasons of farmer-herder conflicts (Genyi, 2017; Shehu, 2018; International Crisis Group, 2017). According to McGregor in Dyege, Agbe and Idoko (2022) for decades now, conflict between farmers and herders has been a reoccurring issue in Nigeria particularly in the North Central regions.

Different communities in the North Central Nigeria have witnessed and suffered from attacks of herders which have led to loss of lives and property, with victims vacating their homes and taking refuge in peaceful neighbouring communities for safety. As this conflict permeates various layers of society, it inevitably impacts the younger generation, particularly University students who are at critical stage of personal and academic development. The incessant farmers and herders' clashes may result to psycho-social disequilibrium. Psycho-social disequilibrium has the capacity to alter one's perception of the world and all aspects of it. University students living in such Communities fear or panic because they are uncertain about when the farmer and herders may clash next. There is every tendency that the trauma experienced during the period of clashes may influence the psychological (mental and emotional), and social well-being of resident students. In other words, witnessing or experiencing the clashes between farmers and herders especially in Universities' host communities and University surroundings may have impact on psycho-social well-being of university students; affecting their mental health, academic activities, inter-personal interactions and social relationships. This may lead to fear, tension, depressive symptoms, post-traumatic stress and other psychological issues. Farmers and herders' clashes constitute a serious threat to psychological and social well-being of university students in the host communities. It has been observed that these farmer-herders clashes are highly characterized by a series of crimes of violence like rape and assault that resulted in injury to the victims which are mostly students who do not only stop schooling but abandon it and flee for their lives (Gamgum, 2018). Thus, the activities have toll on their psycho-social well-being.

Psycho-social well-being refers to the interconnection between psychological and social factors that contribute to an individual's overall health and quality of life (Adeboye & Beoku-Betts, 2019). It encompasses mental and emotional well-being, social relationships, and the ability to cope with stress, adapt to change, and engage with one's environment in a positive way. The psycho-social approach looks at individuals in the context of the combined influence that psychological factors and the surrounding social environment have on their physical and mental wellness and their ability to function. For University students, the psycho-social well-being encompasses the overall state of their mental, emotional and social health during their time in university. Farmers and herders' clashes are capable of affecting students' psycho-social and overall well-being. The psycho-social well-being of university students depend among others on the security situation of the school and surrounding environments; if this is threatened, then the psycho-social well-being of university students is also threatened. When this happens, students' levels of anxiety build up, affecting their

abilities to concentrate on academic task, some even withdraw from many activities. This is because farmers and herders' clashes are known to claim lives of people (students inclusive), deplete skills, erode productivity, decimate the workforce, undermine investment, erode sense of identity and belonging, and change structure of social cohesion, disrupt academic success and functioning.

Psychological well-being may be influenced by farmers and herders' clashes. Psychological well-being is a broad concept or construct, and as such there is often debate over its definition. Diener in Akintola (2019) referred psychological well-being as a subjective evaluation of life: the emotions we feel, the activities we engage in, the balance of pleasurable and painful experiences we have, and our general satisfaction with life. Karunanayake, Rathnayake and Vimukthi (2020) agreed that psychological well-being means the mental and emotional status of an individual. The authors stressed that essentially it addresses how children think about themselves and their future and how they handle and cope with situations. For Ryff in Akintola (2019) psychological well-being is stated as a multidimensional structure rather than a mere combination of positive and negative affect and life satisfaction. Similarly, Vaingankar, Subramaniam, Lim, Serbourne, Luo and Ryam in Oduwaye, Kiraz, and Sorakin (2023) asserted that psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct encompassing various aspects of an individual's mental and emotional health, including relationships, physical health, personal growth, life purpose, and spirituality. It refers to a person's overall sense of satisfaction, emotional adequacy, and happiness. In other words, it refers to people's ability to cope with trauma, stress, and adversity (Salami, 2011) Research on psychological well-being has shown that it is not just the absence of adverse mental health outcomes and disorders such as depression, anxiety, and mental disorders; instead, it is a positive and holistic mental and emotional health (Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith in Oduwaye, *et al.*, 2023). Positive emotions and experiences, such as happiness, satisfaction with life, and healthy relationships, are crucial components of psychological well-being. Deci and Ryan in Oduwaye, *et al.* (2023) opined that people with a sense of purpose and who feel they are making a positive impact are more likely to experience optimum psychological well-being. Psychological studies have proven that people can develop adequately only in an environment with certain parameters, one of the most significant of which is safety, which is a basic human need (Maslow 1943). This has a key role in providing for the mental health and emotional development of university students (adolescents) and their social identity and functioning.

According to Giancaman *et al.* in Anho, Okogi, Enudi, Efe and Ebom (2023) the experience of clash-related violence is a strong predictor of depressive-like states which in turn impacts on student's performance. This suggests that a depressed person is not likely to psychologically produce a good or proper well-being. In a similar view, Kashani and Orvaschel in Gamgum (2018) aver that one of the most common psychological problems among students is depression; depression may be experienced at the same time as conflict or any unpalatable experience students face in school especially the frequent clashes between the farmers and herders causing a distraction to them and leading to poor academic work. The authors further stated that students feel lonely, but at its worst, depression can lead to suicide. According to Elgard and Arlett, in Anho *et al.* (2023), depression could be smaller or deeper; in deeper cases of depression, students show the symptoms of low self-esteem, self-blame, hopelessness, suicide thoughts, anger and peevishness. In consistency, sometime in February 2018, according to Ejembi and Gyang (2018), the vice chancellor of Plateau state University in Bokkos raised alarm on how deadly herdsmen who entered University were harassing female students. This may inevitably impact on their mental and emotional health.

Nasongo and Muola in Anho *et al.* (2023) posited that "when children undergo through traumatic experiences, their sense of the world order and safety becomes shuttered. This may definitely affect their concentration in school and their academic activities." For example, a University student who is maimed or has lost a loved one or sponsor in a clash between farmers and herders may definitely lose some sense of reasoning because of trauma. The traumatized individual has the likelihood of losing cognitive functioning and concentration which may in turn impact on psychological well-being. For Justino (2016) the increased rate of poverty, high rate of absence from schools, anxiety, depression and the increasing aggression among students could be attributed to this farmers-herders' conflict in Benue state due to the negative effect conflict could cause on people's emotional life. Reports of internally displacement of persons abound which occurs when herders and farmers clashes occurs. Ofemi and Inyang in Okoro (2018) argued that the presence of farmers and herders' clashes can lead to the displacement of local communities and disruption of traditional ways of life, which can have negative impact on the psychological well-being of individuals affected by the changes. In corroboration, Obadare (2022) agreed that competition for resources such as land and water between herders and farmers and other members of the University community can lead to frustration, resentment and anxiety among those who feel their resources are being threatened. For example, in April 26, 2017, the University of Ilorin, Kwara state gave a seven-day ultimatum to herdsmen encroaching on its land to quit the

campus, but it was not obeyed (Oyeleye & Adeyemo, 2018). Sometime in February 2018, the vice chancellor of University of Ilorin, Kwara state accused herdsmen of poisoning the University's dam with chemicals (Oyeleye & Adeyemo, 2018). Baingana in Mir, Rather and Prusty (2016) asserted that mental disorders and psycho-social consequences associated with conflicts include sleeplessness, fear, nervousness, anger, aggressiveness, depression, flashbacks, substance abuse, suicide, and domestic and sexual violence. Adesina and Kanmodi (2019b); Bisson, Cosgrove, Lewis, and Roberts (2015); and Adesina, Adesanya, and Olufadewa (2020) opined that individuals including school children's well-being affected by conflict could present varying mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), anxiety disorder, depression, substance misuse, psychosis, anti-social behaviours, somatic symptoms such as headaches, non-specific pains or discomfort in torso and limbs, dizziness, weakness, and fatigue, and among others. Nwankwo, Ike, Officha, Obi and Peters (2019) investigated psychological implications of Fulani herdsmen religio-organizational terrorism in Eastern Nigeria. The result of the study identified mental health challenge, withdrawal tendency, life frustration and trauma as the psychological implications of the herdsmen attacks in Eastern Nigeria. It also revealed that social anxiety, tribal hatred, high insecurity and crime, and family disintegration were the social implications of the Fulani herdsmen attacks in Eastern Nigeria. A study was conducted by Umaru, Yalle, Madueke, Chioma, Abiola and Dhikyilnan (2022) on traumatic and psychological implications of armed herdsmen invasion of southern Kaduna, Nigeria. The major finding showed by (61.10) of the respondents that the attacks by armed herdsmen have caused untold traumatic experiences on the people of Southern Kaduna. It was also revealed by a higher percentage (77.5) that the attacking herdsmen have caused psychological torture and undue fears on the people of Southern Kaduna.

Social well-being is defined as the subjective evaluation of personal life circumstances and functioning in society (Keyes, 2018). According to Sinclair (2021) social well-being involved the sharing, developing, and sustaining of meaningful relationships with others. This allows one to feel authentic and valued, and provide a sense of connectedness and belonging. When people are socially connected and have stable and supportive relationships; they are more likely to make healthy choices to have better mental and physical health outcomes. They are better able to cope with hard times, stress, anxiety, and depression. Students' positive and satisfying life-experiences are expected to flourish as their well-being increases. Students who study in a serene or safe school environment may experience social skills, increased empathy and a great sense of belonging within the school community and vice-versa.

According to Lyam in Anho *et al.* (2023) clashes tend to create an atmosphere of hatred, aggression and lack of co-operation which is an unfriendly and an uncondusive environment for community development. In such an unfriendly environment, social interactions may stand affected. Olaosebikan in Anho *et al.* (2023) contends that one of the attendant effects of wars and clashes is the emergence of numerous displaced persons. This displacement affects social interactions among people, since everybody flees for fear of being attacked. With this displacement of the people particularly farmers and herders' clashes, it is likely that the social relationships existing among them may no longer be peaceful co-existence. This is because with the displacement of people, students inclusive, the various components of social interactions within educational setting-student/student, student/teacher and school community relations may have no room to flourish. Daru in Anho *et al.* (2023) on his part, stated that due to behavioural and psychological problems occasioned by violent clashes, that the social interactions among peers are seriously hampered. While Burton (2016) found that clashes between farmers and herders can create an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion which has a way of affecting social interaction in and outside the school. Anho *et al.* (2023) asserted that farmers-herders' clashes impact students' interaction within and outside the school setting. The social effects of farmers and herdsman clashes threaten peace and tranquility among various groups. Okoli and Atelhe (2014) viewed that such clashes create tense and volatile inter-group relations amongst the various people. This manifests in mutual mistrust and animosity which are often misplaced. In view of this, the herdsman see the farmers (natives) as enemies of their collective survival and destiny, and vice versa. The authors continued by arguing that, the clashes create an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and perpetual tension that threatens peaceful coexistence, security and stability of society. In addition, Tonah in Okoli and Atelhe (2014) contended that farmers and herdsman conflict lead to threats and intimidation forcing both to leave conflict-prone settlements. In this regard, the tense relationship affects the level of cooperation and economic exchanges between the two groups. Nonetheless, [www.aljazeera.com](http://www.aljazeera.com) [tagged "Nigeria's herder-farmer conflict"] reported that tension can arise between herders, farmers, and other members of University community; leading to conflicts and feelings of fear, mistrust and insecurity. Adesina, Adesanya and Olufadewa (2020) further ascertained that conflict in Nigeria has resulted in the death, displacement, sexual violations, injuries, disabilities among others, of the population affected. Anho, Ogoji, Enudi, Efe and Ebom (2023) carried out a study on militating effect of farmers-herders' clashes and students' social interaction on academic achievement in Edo and Delta states: implications for school counsellors and administrators.

The result showed that farmers-herders clashes have effect on students' academic achievements as students in the clashes affected areas performed lower than their counterparts in the non-affected areas. It also showed that farmers-herders' clashes impact on the students' social interactions from the affected tertiary institutions of learning in Edo and Delta states. By implication, that the clashes exert a significant psychological trauma on the students thereby equally affecting their social interactions. From all ramifications, farmers and herders' clashes may influence the psychological and social well-being of university students in North Central Nigeria. The clashes were initially believed to be mere ancestral farmers and herders' conflicts; until eventually, degenerated into a full-blown blood bath of an unmanageable magnitude.

The researchers observed that farmers and herders' clashes in host communities affect life and can seep into campuses which may pose threat to psycho-social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria. With the rise in occurrence of farmers and herders' clashes in the region, students may be facing increasing psycho-social burdens that may impact on their mental, emotional (psychological) and social well-being. The psychological and social impacts of farmers and herders' clashes, such as anxiety, depression, stress, fear and social isolation are believed to undermine University students' mental health, social functioning, academic activities and general quality of life. What this means is that farmers-herders' clashes may put the University students in poor psycho-social state that can influence students' physical, emotional, mental, social, and academic well-being, which in turn, may negatively influence their behaviour and impede learning. The focus of this study therefore is to determine influence farmers and herders' clashes may have on psychological and social well-being of University students. It is against this background that it becomes alluring to investigate influence of farmers and herders' clashes on psycho-social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria: implications for counselling.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Nigeria, citizens including University students are scared of moving freely as a result of the present state of threat or danger posed by security challenges in the country especially in the North Central part of Nigeria. This region in Nigeria has been contending with several security challenges such as farmers and herders' clashes.

Farmers and herders' clashes lead to fear, anxiety, tension, depression, stress and other negative or unpleasant emotions in the affected citizens especially among undergraduates in the host communities. These students experience a sense of helplessness, apprehension,

uncertainty, and vulnerability that may hinder their abilities to focus on their studies and engage in healthy social interactions. When students are preoccupied with concerns about their safety because of security threats posed by farmers and herders' clashes, they may find it challenging to concentrate in class, complete assignments, or perform well in examinations. This may result in either a reduction in their grades and/or overall educational outcomes. The threats related to ensuring the safety or protection of University students may lead to mental and psychological distress that may affect students' abilities to form and maintain positive relationships with their peers and others. They may also become withdrawn, socially isolated, or exhibit behavioral changes.

These factors can further exacerbate their psychological well-being and hinder their social and emotional development. Since this security issue has become a reoccurring issue in North Central Nigeria, Universities in Host communities are constantly troubled by the threat to their security vis-a-vis the effects on University students' psychological and social well-being. It is against this background that the researcher sets out to investigate influence of farmers and herders' clashes on psycho-social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria and implications for counselling.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine influence of farmers and herders' clashes on psycho-social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria and implications for counselling. Specifically, this study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. to determine the extent to which farmers and herders' clashes influence psychological well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria.
2. to determine the extent to which farmers and herders' clashes influence social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent do farmers and herders' clashes influence psychological well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria?
2. To what extent do farmers and herders' clashes influence social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria?

## Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Farmers and herders' clashes have no significant influence on psychological well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria.
2. Farmers and herders' clashes have no significant influence on social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted survey research design. The study area was North Central Nigeria. A total of four hundred (400) undergraduates were sampled from a population of one hundred and ninety-eight thousand, eighty-six (198,086) undergraduates of Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria using Taro-Yamen's formula. A multi-stage sampling procedure which included purposive or judgmental sampling technique, proportionate stratified random sampling technique, and ballot simple random sampling technique were used at different stages in the study. A questionnaire structured by the researcher titled "Influence of Farmers and Herders Clashes on Psycho-Social Well-Being of University Students" (IFHCPSWBUS) was used for data collection. It contained ten (10) items and was grouped into two clusters. Cluster "A" has (5) items designed to elicit information on the extent to which farmers and herders' clashes influence psychological well-being of university students. Cluster "B" contains (5) items meant to elicit information on the extent to which farmers and herders' clashes influence psychological well-being of university students. The rating scales were as follows: Very High Extent (VHE) = 4, High Extent (HE) = 3, Low Extent (LE) = 2 and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1. Three experts validated the instrument. An overall instrument reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient in determining the internal consistency of the items. Descriptive statistics involving mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the inferential statistics of chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) goodness of fit was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## Result and Presentation

To what extent do farmers and herders' clashes influence psychological well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria?

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) of Influence of Farmers and Herders' Clashes on Psychological Well-Being of University Students in North Central Nigeria. (N =400)**

S/No.	Items	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1	Frequent clashes between farmers and herders make me feel anxious about my safety	400	3.75	.50	HE
2	Clashes between farmers and herders have affected my ability to focus on academic tasks due to tension	400	3.64	.54	HE
3	Clashes between farmers and herders in university surroundings agitate me while on campus	400	3.49	.55	HE
4	I feel traumatized by reports related to farmers and herders' clashes around my university community	400	3.50	.53	HE
5	I feel a sense of hopelessness about the prospects of peaceful coexistence in the university host community	400	3.49	.69	HE
	<b>Cluster Mean</b>		3.57	.56	HE

*N = Number of Respondents,  $\bar{X}$  = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, HE= High Extent*

Result in table 1 showed that farmers and herders' clashes influence psychological well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria with cluster mean of 3.57 and Standard Deviation (SD) of .56 which the cluster mean value was up to the anchor point of 2.50 and above. This is further revealed by each of the items in this order: items 1 - 5 have Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) of 3.75, 3.64, 3.49, 3.50 and 3.49 with Standard Deviation (SD) of .50, .54, .55, .53 and .69 respectively. The mean values were up to 2.50 and above which is the bench mark. This was interpreted as very high extent and therefore indicates that farmers and herders' clashes highly influence psychological well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria.

**Research question 2:** To what extent do farmers and herders' clashes influence social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria?

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) of Influence of Farmers and Herders' Clashes on Social Well-Being of University Students in North Central Nigeria. (N = 400)**

S/No	Items	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
6	Farmers and herders' clashes have affected the level of social relationships existing among students and their peers in my University.	400	3.65	.56	HE
7	Farmers and herders' clashes create atmosphere of suspicion which affects social interaction in and outside surroundings of my university	400	3.54	.60	HE
8	The tension of farmers and herders' clashes have affected my participation in extracurricular activities	400	3.34	.74	HE
9	Disruption of host communities due to farmers and herders' clashes has made students in my school to be restricted in their movements.	400	3.42	.58	HE

10	Displacement of host communities due to farmers and herders' clashes make some students in my school to avoid living off campus	400	3.43	.64	HE
	Cluster Mean		3.48	.62	HE

$N = \text{Number of Respondents}$ ,  $\bar{X} = \text{Mean}$ ,  $SD = \text{Standard Deviation}$ ,  $HE = \text{High Extent}$

Table 2 above; revealed that farmers and herders' clashes influence social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria with cluster mean of 3.48 and Standard Deviation (SD) of .62 which the cluster mean value was up to the anchor point of 2.50 and above. This is further revealed by each of the items in this order: the Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) responses are 3.65, 3.54, 3.34, 3.42 and 3.43 with Standard Deviation (SD) of .56, .60, .74, .58 and .64 starting from item 6 to 10 respectively. From the result, it has shown that each mean is above the anchor point of 2.50 which depicts that the extent to which farmers and herders' clashes influence social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria is very high. This means that the responses are of very high extent from the respondents that the farmers and herders' clashes influence social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria.

### Hypothesis 1

Farmers and herders' clashes have no significant influence on psychological well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria

**Table 3: Chi-square Analysis of Influence of Farmers and Herders' Clashes on Psychological Well-Being of University Students in North Central Nigeria.**

	OBSERVED Values	EXPECTED Values	N	X <sup>2</sup> -Values	Df	A	Asymp. Sig.	Remark
VHE	245	100.00	400	405.78	3		0.05	.000
HE	143	100.00						
LE	10	100.00						
VLE	2	100.00						

$N = \text{Sample size}$ ,  $df = \text{degree of freedom}$ ,  $A = \text{Level of significance}$ ,  $\text{Asymp. Sig.} = P\text{-value}$

Table 3 showed the result of chi-square of 405.78 with degree of freedom of 3 at 0.05 level of significance out of 400 respondents ( $N = 400$ ). The Asymp sig. (P) value of 0.000 was obtained. Since P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significance ( $P < 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) which states that farmers and herders' clashes have no significant influence on psychological well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria is rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted. This implies that, farmers and herders' clashes have significant influence on psychological well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria.

## Hypothesis 2

Farmers and herders clashes have no significant influence on social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria.

**Table 4: Chi-square Analysis of Influence of Farmers and Herders Clashes on Social Well-Being of University Students in North Central Nigeria.**

	OBSERVED Values	EXPECTED Values	N	X <sup>2</sup> -Values	Df	A	Asymp. Sig.	Remark
VHE	208	100.00	400	330.80	3		0.05	.000
HE	172	100.00						
LE	14	100.00						
VLE	6	100.00						

*N* = Sample size, *df* = degree of freedom, *A* = Level of significance, *Asymp. Sig.* = *P*-value

Table 4 showed the result of chi-square of 330.80 with degree of freedom of 3 at 0.05 level of significant with the Asymp sig. (*P*) value of 0.000 out of 400 respondents (*N*= 400). Since *P*-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significant ( $P < 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) which states that farmer and herders' clashes have no significant influence on social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria is rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted. This implies that, farmer and herders' clashes have significant influence on social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The finding of this study based on research question one determined the extent to which farmers and herders' clashes influence psychological well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria, and related test of hypothesis one; which stated that farmers and herders' clashes have no significant influence on psychological well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria. However, finding has shown that there is significant influence of farmers and herders' clashes on psychological well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that farmers and herders' clashes have no significant influence on psychological well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria is rejected. The finding indicated that clashes between farmers and herders make some University students to be anxious about their safety; feel agitated while on campus; affect their abilities to focus on academic tasks due to tension; and feel traumatized by reports related to farmers and herders' clashes among others. This study is supported by Nwankwo *et al.* (2019) that identified mental health challenge, withdrawal

tendency, life frustration and trauma as the psychological implications of the herdsmen attacks in Eastern Nigeria which is similar. This present finding is also agreed by Umaru *et al.* (2022) whose major finding showed by the respondents that the attacks by armed herdsmen have caused untold traumatic experiences on the people of Southern Kaduna. It was also revealed by a higher percentage (77.5) that the attacking herdsmen have caused psychological torture and undue fears on the people of Southern Kaduna. This finding is a clear indication that farmers and herders' clashes in host communities can have a lasting impact on psychological well-being of University students.

The finding of this study based on research question two and hypothesis two showed that farmers and herders' clashes have significant influence on social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria. The null hypothesis which states that farmers and herders' clashes have no significant influence on social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria is rejected. The study found that farmers and herders' clashes affect the level of social relationship existing between students and their peers; create atmosphere of suspicion which affect social interactions in and outside surroundings of students' University; the tension caused by farmers and herders' clashes affect students' participation in extracurricular activities; disruption of host communities due to farmers and herders' clashes have made some students to be restricted in their movements; and displacement of host communities because of farmers and herders' clashes made some students to avoid living off campuses. The study of Nwankwo *et al.* (2019) was similar to this study. The study identified the social implications of the Fulani herdsmen attacks to include social anxiety, tribal hatred, high insecurity and crime, and family disintegration. The finding by Anho *et al.* (2023) was also in line with the present study, which revealed that farmers-herders' clashes impact on the students' social interactions from the affected tertiary institutions of learning in Edo and Delta states. It further, identified that the clashes exert a significant psychological trauma on the students thereby equally affecting their social interactions.

The findings from this study revealed that students facing farmers and herders' clashes in the University require counselling to address the underlying issues, such as anxiety and tension which lead to feeling of insecurity. These feelings of anxiety and tension impact on academic performances and the overall well-being of the individual. These students also witness security threats which can cause emotional trauma that requires professional support. Suspicion and avoidance were also noticed as students avoid some friends, reduce extra-curricular activities such as sports and group discussions, restrict their movements and avoid living off campus among others. This suspicion affects their social and academic lives.

### **Counselling implications**

In line with these findings some counselling strategies are hereby suggested:

1. **Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TF-CBT):** This therapy is an adaptation of CBT specifically designed for individuals who have experienced trauma. TF-CBT is particularly beneficial for children and adolescents, helping them process their trauma in a supportive environment. The intervention involves gradual exposure to trauma-related thoughts and feelings while teaching coping mechanisms to manage distress. Techniques like narrative exposure and relaxation skills are utilized to help clients articulate their experiences safely (Ike & Onyekachi, 2019). Recognizing the potential development of PTSD symptoms and social disconnectedness due to exposure to farmer and herders' clashes highlights the need for trauma-informed counselling. TF-CBT can assist victims in processing their trauma and developing resilience. TF-CBT aims at reducing symptoms of PTSD and improves overall functioning in the aftermath of traumatic events such as the farmers and herders' clashes under study.

2. **Narrative Therapy:** Narrative therapy is a therapeutic approach that encourages victims of farmer and herders' clashes to tell their personal stories and reframe their experiences. For Chukwu and Mohammed (2019) this intervention allows clients to separate themselves from their problems, viewing them as external challenges rather than intrinsic flaws. By articulating their narratives, clients can gain a deeper understanding of how their experiences shape their identities and beliefs. In the case of farmers and herders' clashes, narrative therapy helps victims reframe their trauma as a part of their life story rather than a defining moment. This shift in perspective fosters empowerment and encourages University students to explore alternative paths forward. Here, the counsellor acts as a guide, helping clients identify strengths and weaknesses within their narratives. This process can lead to increased self-awareness and resilience, enabling University students to envision a future beyond their trauma (Eze & Nnaji, 2021). Narrative therapy also emphasizes the importance of social support and community, allowing clients to reconnect with their values and beliefs. Ultimately, this intervention provides a framework for healing and personal growth through storytelling.

3. **Support Groups:** Here the counsellor can facilitate groups for students to share their experiences and develop support net-works.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concludes that farmers and herders' clashes have significant influence on psycho-social well-being of University students in North Central Nigeria. In respect to implications for counselling, it is therefore, imperative to employ some counselling interventions and strategies or approaches to address the declining mental health state and promote psychological well-being that invariably exacerbate social well-being among the University students.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should be more proactive in prioritizing effective and supportive educational policies on safety of learning environments for university students in North Central Nigeria.
2. It is crucial for universities to enhance and facilitate access to mental health services or resources, including counselling and support groups to help students cope with stress, tension, fear, trauma, and anxiety related to farmer and herder's clashes.
3. Universities and government at all levels through the policy makers should promote and engage in long-term initiatives, dialogues and sustainable solution to address underlying tensions between the farmers and herders. The root causes of the conflict in the North central region should be squarely addressed as these impacts on the psychological and social well-being of University students which in turn affects their academic pursuit and success.
4. Universities' management with the help of guidance counsellors should develop trauma-informed care framework which addresses the specific needs of students who experienced or witnessed violence from farmer and herder's clashes. Creating safe space for students to express their concerns and experiences helps to foster a sense of community and shared understanding.

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