

IMPACT OF HERDSMEN ACTIVITIES ON FOOD SECURITY IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract - The study investigated the impact of Herdsmen activities on food security in Kogi State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. A cross-sectional survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 400 households from ten selected communities in Kogi State, purposively sampled and used as the sample size. A researcher-designed instrument titled Impact of Herdsmen Activities on Food Security Questionnaire (IHAFSQ) was used for data collection. It was validated by experts and with overall reliability index of 0.78, obtained using Cronbach Alpha method. Mean and standard deviation were used for answering the research questions while t-test analysis was employed in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result indicated negative impact on food security in the area. The result also revealed no significant difference in the opinion of the respondents on the impact of Herdsmen activities on food security in the state. The study recommended, among others, adequate intervention measures by the government to address the economic impact and food security in the state.

Keywords: Herdsmen, Impact, Food Security, Activities, Insecurity

Introduction

Globally, the security of lives and property remains a cornerstone of sustainable development, particularly in regions where agriculture forms the foundation of the economy. Across Africa, and particularly in Nigeria, the recurring clashes between herders and farming communities have escalated into a significant crisis, undermining food security, displacing populations, and threatening societal stability. The violent interactions between Fulani herdsmen and local communities have led to widespread destruction of property, loss of lives, and the displacement of thousands, contributing to the growing issue of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). This phenomenon reflects deep-rooted insecurity, which continues to disrupt rural livelihoods and agricultural productivity. The activities of Fulani herdsmen have intensified due to the need for grazing pastures amid challenging climatic conditions. This migration into fertile farmlands often results in the destruction of crops, triggering violent conflicts between herders and local farmers. Vanguard (2018) observes that the implementation of anti-grazing laws in some states has exacerbated these

tensions, further intensifying the clashes and creating an atmosphere of insecurity that affects life, property, and food security across the nation, including Kogi State.

Insecurity stemming from the activities of herdsmen in rural areas poses severe challenges to the development of affected states. Nigeria, already burdened with acute poverty, hunger, and social unrest, faces additional threats to its food supply chain due to the destruction of farmlands and the displacement of farming communities. The cycle of conflict, as noted by Human Rights Watch (2013), is fueled by widespread poverty, leaving both herders and farmers unable to access basic necessities. This insecurity significantly hampers agricultural productivity, disrupts rural and urban livelihoods, and poses grave risks to food security. A stable and secure environment is not solely dependent on military strength but also on the capacity to foster socio-economic and political stability. Iheanacho (2012) explains that national and state security encompasses the protection of territorial integrity, the mitigation of threats such as the activities of herdsmen, and the promotion of food security and environmental stability. These elements are essential for sustainable socio-economic development, peaceful coexistence, and the prevention of crises. However, the persistent clashes in Kogi State between herdsmen and farming communities have undermined these ideals, with devastating implications for agricultural output and food availability. The historical context of Fulani herdsmen, as described by Idowu (2017), reveals their migratory lifestyle, tracing their origins to Futa Toro in lower Senegal and their subsequent expansion into regions such as Hausa lands in Nigeria and northern Cameroon by the 16th and 19th centuries. This nomadic tradition of seeking grazing fields, while central to their way of life, often leads to conflicts when it intersects with settled agricultural communities. In Kogi State, this historical and cultural dynamic has escalated into violent confrontations, posing significant threats to food security and socio-economic stability in the region. Hence, addressing this critical issue requires a multidimensional approach that emphasizes the protection of agricultural resources, the restoration of peaceful coexistence between herders and farmers, and the promotion of policies that ensure sustainable development in the affected regions.

In Nigeria, some continue to live as semi-nomadic herders, while others have moved to cities. Unlike the more integrated city dwellers, the nomadic groups spend most of their lives in the bush and are the ones largely involved in

these clashes. They herd their animals across vast areas, frequently clashing with farming communities carrying out criminal activities such as rape, armed robbery and other types of banditry thereby promoting the spate of insecurity between them and host communities. Tonah (2012) observes that the movement of the herdsmen in search of pasture and water across many communities has contributed in hampering social and economic activities due to their notorious activities. The herders often engage in both random and planned transhumance movements with their primary reason for migratory nature being the search for areas with abundant grass and water for the cattle. Hence, the frequency and scale of these Fulani herdsmen attacks on different communities have become alarming. Alawode (2013) asserts that the dimension of militancy in the conflicts is associated with the advent of the aggressive Udawa and Bokoloji Fulani herdsmen which led to the emergence and introduction of guns and other sophisticated weapons in the conflicts as well as the use of mobile phones, and often accompanied with banditry. This particular situation among other things has made the Fulani herdsmen to be armed with sophisticated dangerous arms and ammunitions such as AK47 not only in Kogi State but also across the country. There are escalations of reported attacks by Fulani herders who murder natives of the invaded innocent communities leaving several hectares of farmlands destroyed in many states across the country (Durojaiye, 2014).

The result is not different in Taraba state which has also witnessed series of attacks and killings by Fulani herdsmen. The conflicts orchestrated by Fulani herdsmen in Wukari have led to gruesome murder of dozens of people and wanton destruction of property. According to Onuaha (2016), in Zamfara State, the situation is not different. Some of the worst hit communities are Dansadau and Yargaladima villages in Dansadau Emirate of Maru local government area (Nte, 2016). In Jigawa State, the story remains the same. Over 70 cases of conflicts have been recorded since the beginning of 2015 farming season.

Specifically, against every expectation, Kogi state has lately been featuring consistently in the news bordering on the invasion of its communities by suspected herdsmen, leading to wanton loss of lives and the destruction of farmlands and other properties. Local farming communities in Kogi state which share boundary with Benue state have in recent years become scenes of bloody clashes between herdsmen and farmers. For instance, as far back as October, 2012, there have been reports of herdsmen unprovoked attacks against farmers

and residents in the area which sometimes, resulted into retaliatory attacks. According to a report by Tori (10 December 2018), some Fulani herdsmen invaded two Local Government Councils of Kogi State. In one of the areas after feeding their cattle with the produce of a farm, they attacked the owner of the farm. The farmer was chased to the village where the Fulani herders succeeded in killing 10 other persons and then set their farmland on fire. This has been a reoccurring event in some parts of Kogi State known as one of the agricultural and food producing states in the middle belts.

Kogi state being one of the food baskets of the nation is being threatened by the activities of the Fulani herders in many local farming communities in the area which invariably is affecting the supply of food product to many parts of the nation Okoli and Addo (2018) observe that with an increasing population, the need to expand the capacity of agricultural production to feed the teeming population is very crucial. Kogi state therefore stands a better chance of contributing immensely to this due to its position as one of the key food producing states of the country. The state's economy is driven by agriculture because of its rich produce which includes yam, rice, bean, cassava, sweet-potato, maize, soybean, sorghum, millet, sesame, cocoyam, among others. The state accounts for over 70% of Nigeria's Soybean production. The state as one of the highest farming population (657,767 crop farmers as at 2010) in Nigeria, is also endowed with one of the longest stretches of river (River Benue) in the country with great potential for a viable fishing industry, dry season farming through irrigation and for an inland water-way (Okoli & Addo, 2018).

Food security is when all citizens obtain a safe, personally acceptable, nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes healthy choices, community self reliance and equal access for everyone (Okoli & Addo, 2018). This implies that food security is when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs as well as preferences. In Nigeria and Kogi state in particular, most of its population resides in rural areas, communal violence or conflicts have serious implication of access and availability of food, since agriculture is the main preoccupation of rural population. The production of crops and rearing of livestock is the main economic activity of the people. Therefore herdsmen activities in the states have serious implication on food system. Thus, food insecurity has become an effect of herdsmen activities in the area (Ibrahim,

2018). Herdsmen activities is correlated to food security and, under most circumstances, depresses production and income from cash crops and livestock. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (2014), Fulani herdsmen activities costs Nigeria over \$12 billion worth of agricultural production during the last third of the 20th century.

Not only have herdsmen activities limited production of food, it has the propensity to also deny people access to food and availability of food supply. Specifically, herder and farmers are critical to Nigeria's food security. The Fulani indisputably represent a significant component of the Nigerian economy. They constitute the major breeders of cattle, the main source of meat the most available and cheap source of animal proteins consumed by Nigerians. The Fulani own over 90% of the nation's livestock population which accounts for one third of agricultural GDP and 3.2% of the nation's GDP. This however appears to have been eroded by the persistent crises between Fulani herdsmen and their host communities, particularly farmers in the state.

The activities of the herders have demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the insecurity and food crisis particularly in rural communities where most of the conflicts are localized, with reverberating consequences nationwide (Williams, 2018). On their own part too, the Fulani cattle herdsmen have also identified conflicts arising from land use as the "most important" problem they face in their occupation. Herdsmen attribute the roots of the crisis to religious differences resulting in the killing of their cows while the farmers see the herdsmen as a threat to their crops and agricultural produce since the herdsmen allow their cows to feed on the farmer crops (Ajibefun, 2017). From the foregoing it seems that losses from the farmers-herders conflict are of far-reaching dimensions and implications on both sides, especially on food security.

A review of past studies shows that herdsmen activities have caused untold economic consequences to various towns and communities in Kogi state but has also helped to escalate the problems of the herders' thereby aggravating food insecurity. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of herdsmen activities on food security in Kogi state. Thus, the study determines the impact of herdsmen activities on food security in Kogi state Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Food security is a critical factor in the socio-economic stability of any region, and its sustenance depends on unhindered agricultural activities. Ideally, farmers should be able to cultivate their crops, harvest their produce, and contribute to the overall food supply chain without disruptions. In Kogi State, the fertile lands and agricultural potential are expected to ensure adequate food production, sustain the livelihoods of farming communities, and bolster the state's economy. However, the activities of herdsmen in Kogi State have disrupted this ideal situation. Instances of herdsmen invading farmlands, destroying crops with cattle, and engaging in violent conflicts with farmers have become alarmingly frequent. These activities have resulted in displacement of farming households, destruction of food crops, and a significant reduction in agricultural productivity. Additionally, cases of kidnapping, arson, and loss of lives further exacerbate the challenges faced by farmers in the region. This situation has created a gap between the expected ideal of sustainable food production and the harsh realities confronting farmers in Kogi State. The persistent activities of herdsmen threaten not only the livelihood of farmers but also food security for the entire region. The problem, therefore, lies in addressing these herdsmen-related challenges and mitigating their impact on food security in Kogi State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the impact of herdsmen activities on food security in Kogi state, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the:

1. nature of herdsmen activities in Kogi State
2. food security challenges of the herdsmen activities in the State

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the nature of herdsmen activities in Kogi state?
2. What are the food security challenges of herdsmen activities in Kogi state?

Hypotheses

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

- H₀₁:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of rural and urban households in Kogi states on the nature of herdsmen activities in the state.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of rural and urban households in Kogi states on food security challenges of herdsmen activities in the state.

Methods

The study was carried out in Kogi state to determine the impact of herdsmen activities on food security. Two research questions and two null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The population comprised 1,240 households selected from 10 affected communities in three local councils in the states while the sample size was 400 households obtained through simple random sampling techniques using balloting without replacement. A researcher-designed questionnaire titled Impact of Herdsmen Activities on Food Security Questionnaire (IHAFSQ) was used as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was validated by three experts, all from the Department of Educational Foundations, two from Sociology Unit and one from Measurement and Evaluation, all in University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instrument was structured on a 4 point rating scale of Strongly Agree(SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree(SD) with assigned values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The reliability estimate of the instrument obtained was 0.86 using Cronbach Alpha Method. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while t- test analysis was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 levels of significance

Results

Research Question One (RQ1): What is the nature of herdsmen activities in Kogi state?

Table 1: Mean ratings of households on the nature of herdsmen activities in Kogi state

		n=400		
Item Statement	\bar{X}	SD	Dec	
Herdsmen attack the farmers in their farmland	3.02	0.72	Agree	
2 Their cattle destroy their food crops	3.24	0.66	Agree	
3 They chase them away from their home	2.98	0.81	Agree	

4	They kill some of the farmers	3.11	0.69	Agree
5	They kidnap some of the farmers	3.00	0.74	Agree
6	They rape their women	3.12	0.71	Agree
7	They stop economic activities	3.25	0.65	Agree
8	They stop them from farming activities	3.30	0.61	Agree
Grand mean		3.13	0.70	Agree

The result in table one shows the responses of the households on the nature of herdsmen activities in Kogi state. The mean scores of the respondents of items 1-8 are seen to be above the criterion mean of 2.50 bench-mark for acceptance level. This implies that the respondents are in agreement that items 1-8 are the nature of herdsmen activities in Kogi state. The above result was also supported by the grand mean of the respondents.

Research Question Two (RQ2): What are the food security challenges of herdsmen activities in Kogi state?

Table 2: Mean ratings of herdsmen activities on food security challenges in Kogi state

n=400

S/N	Item Statement	\bar{X}	SD	Dec
9	Herdsmen activities reduces farmers food crop output	3.21	0.67	Agree
10	It affects food supply to other states	3.14	0.72	Agree
11	It reduces farmers income	3.00	0.74	Agree
12	It affects states economy	3.23	0.66	Agree
13	It leads to setting farms on fire	2.85	0.82	Agree
14	Leads to famine	3.20	0.68	Agree
15	Leads to abandonments of farms by farmers	3.11	0.73	Agree
16	Leads to displacement of farmers	3.16	0.71	Agree
Grand mean		3.15	0.72	Agree

Result in table 2 shows that the mean scores of the respondents on herdsmen activities on food security challenges are above the criterion mean of 2.50. This implies that the households are in agreement that items 9-16 are the challenges of herdsmen activities on food security in Kogi state. The above result is also supported by the mean scores of the households on the table

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of rural and urban households in Kogi states on the nature of herdsmen activities in the state.

Table 3: t-test analysis of urban and rural households on the nature of herdsmen activities in Kogi state

	Group	N	X	SD	df	Cal-t value	Critical-t value	Level of sign	Dec
1	Urban	1.20	3.00	0.71	388	0.065	1.68	0.05	NS
2	Rural	2.80	3.12	0.70					

Table 3 shows that the calculated t-value of 0.065 is less than the critical t-value of 1.68 at 388 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the t-calculated value is less than t-critical value, the null hypotheses of no significant difference of the study is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference between urban and rural households on the nature of herdsmen activities in Kogi state.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of rural and urban households in Kogi states on food security challenges of herdsmen activities in the state.

Table 4: t-test analysis of urban and rural households on the challenges of herdsmen activities on food security in the state

S/N	Group	N	X	SD	df	Cal-t value	Critical-t value	Level of sign	Dec
1	Urban	1.20	3.14	0.69	388	0.075	1.68	0.05	NS
2	Rural	2.80	3.00	0.74					

Table 4 indicates that the calculated t-value of 0.075 is less than the critical t-value of 1.68 at 388 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the t-calculated value is less than t-critical value, the second hypothesis of no significant difference of the study is accepted. This implies that both urban and rural households did not differ in their views on the herdsmen activities on the food security challenges in the state.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed the nature of herdsmen activities in Kogi State, which have significantly impacted farmers and their livelihoods. These activities include violent attacks on farmers in their farmlands, destruction of food crops by cattle, displacement of farmers and their families from their homes, and cases of kidnapping and murder of farmers or their relatives. These observations align with the opinions of Tonah (2013) and Alawode (2013), who

reported that herdsmen frequently invade farmlands across various communities, causing displacement of residents and widespread destruction of food and cash crops. The destructive nature of these attacks was further corroborated by the hypothesis tested in the study, which found no significant difference in opinions among households regarding the nature of Fulani herdsmen attacks in Kogi State. This consensus underscores the pervasive and uniform nature of these activities across the affected regions.

Additionally, the study identified several food security challenges associated with herdsmen activities in Kogi State. These challenges include a marked reduction in farmers' food production output, a decrease in the supply of food to other states, and a decline in farmers' income, which further impacts the local and state economy. Other adverse effects include the burning of farmlands, leading to acute food shortages, famine, and the abandonment of farmlands as farmers are displaced from their communities. These findings are consistent with the views of Idegu (2015) and Babagana, Madaki, Ibrahim, Adamu, and Gujja (2019), who observed that the destruction of farms and crops not only reduced farmers' income but also had a detrimental effect on the state's economy. Similarly, Ajibefun (2017) emphasized that herdsmen activities have significantly disrupted food production, resulting in widespread famine among communities in Kogi State. Hence, the acceptance of the hypothesis of no significant difference in the opinions of households further validates the findings, indicating that the impact of herdsmen activities on food security is a shared concern across the affected communities. This agreement highlights the urgency of addressing the food security and socio-economic challenges posed by herdsmen activities to mitigate their negative consequences on Kogi State's agricultural sector and overall economy.

Educational Implications for Sociology of Education

The findings of this study have significant educational implications within the context of sociology of education, particularly in understanding how socio-economic and security issues, such as herdsmen activities, influence education and societal development. The disruption caused by herdsmen activities, poor food production, reduced farmers' income, and the declining state economy poses a threat not only to food security but also to the overall socio-economic stability of Kogi State. These challenges highlight the interconnectedness of societal factors, such as agriculture, economy, and education. In the context of sociology

of education, these findings emphasize the need for educational institutions to incorporate topics such as conflict resolution, community engagement, and the socio-economic impact of security challenges into their curriculum. By raising awareness about the socio-economic consequences of herdsmen activities, students can be equipped with the knowledge and skills to address and mitigate such issues in their communities. Moreover, the findings suggest that the government and educational policymakers should prioritize educational programs that foster community collaboration and empower individuals with strategies for conflict resolution.

Encouraging partnerships between local communities and the government can lead to innovative solutions to address the menace of herdsmen activities. Additionally, the displacement of farmers and economic instability caused by these conflicts underscores the need for education to focus on building resilience and adaptability in affected populations, ensuring that future generations are better prepared to navigate and resolve such crises. Finally, these implications call for an interdisciplinary approach to education, bridging sociology, agriculture, and conflict management to create a well-rounded understanding of how socio-economic challenges impact not only livelihoods but also the social and educational fabric of society.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the nature of herdsmen attacks and the food security challenges resulting from their activities in Kogi State are critical issues requiring immediate attention. These challenges pose serious threats not only to life and property but also to the agricultural output and overall food security of the state. The findings revealed that herdsmen activities, such as attacking farmers, destroying crops, displacing communities, and in some cases, engaging in kidnapping and killings, have significantly disrupted the livelihoods of farmers and the economic stability of the state. It is further concluded that the reduction in farmers' food output, destruction of crops, displacement of farming communities, and abandonment of farmlands have far-reaching implications for food availability and the state's economy. These activities contribute to food shortages, famine, and a decline in the income of farming households, further exacerbating poverty and insecurity in the region. The study emphasizes the urgent need for collaborative efforts between the government, local communities, and relevant stakeholders to address these challenges. Measures must be implemented to

mitigate the impact of herdsmen activities, ensure the safety of farming communities, and promote sustainable agricultural practices to restore food security and economic stability in Kogi State.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study has contributed to the body of knowledge in the sociology of education and food security by highlighting the impact of herdsmen activities on agricultural productivity and societal well-being in Kogi State, Nigeria. The findings provide empirical evidence on the destructive nature of herdsmen activities, such as attacks on farmers, displacement of communities, and destruction of crops, emphasizing the significant threats these pose to food security and economic stability in the region. The study extends existing literature by identifying specific food security challenges linked to herdsmen activities, including reduced food production, diminished income for farmers, abandonment of farmlands, and heightened risk of famine. Furthermore, it underscores the interconnectedness of security, economic livelihood, and sustainable agriculture, offering a sociological perspective on the broader implications of herdsmen-farmer conflicts. The research also provides actionable insights for policymakers, community leaders, and other stakeholders, emphasizing the need for urgent interventions to address the root causes of herdsmen activities and their impact on food security. By presenting evidence-based recommendations, this study serves as a valuable resource for designing targeted policies and fostering collaborative efforts to restore stability and agricultural productivity in affected areas.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations emerged

1. The people of Kogi and especially the farmers should report any acts of threat from the herdsmen within their territory to the appropriate authority as soon as possible
2. The government should as a matter of urgency create a ranching colony for the herdsmen for grazing their cattle, to forestall the impending threats to food security in the state for the interest of the people and the nation at large

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