

# Socio-Cultural Analysis of Conflict between Farmers and Herdsmen in Ondo State

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## ABSTRACT

Violent conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria has assumed a dangerous dimension in recent years causing thousands of lives and economic losses. The reoccurrence of this conflict posed greater challenges and concern among authorities and the citizenry of Nigeria. Many factors have been attributed to this which include among others climate change, competition for scarce land resources, global warming also caused available space water to dry up, the collapse of old traditional negotiation mechanisms between groups, encroachment by farmers, and other government/ nongovernmental activities on cattle routes, etc. The conflict which was prevalent in the northern part of the country has increased spreading throughout Nigeria, most especially some parts of southern states, namely Oyo and Ondo. Therefore, this paper examined the socio-cultural analysis of the conflict in Ondo State using a secondary source of data collection. The paper recommended restoration of traditional negotiation mechanisms between farmers and herdsmen, enhanced harmonious relationship between the groups, synergy among various security agencies, establishment and resuscitation of abandoned cattle ranching reserves, the establishment of a joint farmers-herdsmen forum to facilitate proper dissemination of information towards curbing the conflict.

**KEYWORD:** Conflict, Farmers, Herdsmen, Socio-cultural factors, Analysis

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Pastoralism is not new to human existence. It is as old as man. Modern agriculture will see it as a form of animal husbandry. But because of the peculiarities associated with the job, the herders usually live nomadic or semi-nomadic life. In the earliest period of Nigeria, herders and farmers have co-existed peacefully without any fear or threat (Alonge, 2019). Nzeh (2015) observed that the farmers-herdsmen relationship was cordial in the time past before the relationship went bad. However, in recent years, the conflict has escalated and turned destructive and violent since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Egbata, 2018). The violent conflict between nomadic pastoralists and farmers in Nigeria has caused thousands of lives and economic losses. The conflict generally centered on access to and struggle for grazing land and water (Shehu, 2018). According to Shehu (2018), it was observed that on daily basis the grazing land is continuously shrinking and diminishing due to factors such as climate change which lead to its takeover of arable land by desert, global warming also caused available space water to dry up, its encroachment by the farmers and other government/non-governmental activities, etc. make farmers and herdsmen conflict inevitable.

The conflict was prevalent in the northern part of the country. The North-East and Central geopolitical zones have

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witnessed the most brutal violence occasioned by the conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria. According to the spotlight, an International Review For Peace Initiative (2016), the areas that are most affected according to the report are Taraba North-West, South-East Plateau, Zamfara, and some rural areas of Borno State.

However, in recent years the farmers-herdsmen violent conflicts have increased spreading in Nigeria most especially the southern states namely Oyo and Ondo. A report published by the FAO country Programming Framework (CPF) (2013-2017) revealed that 50-75 percent of the land areas of four North-Eastern and six North Western States is becoming desert the areas where these herders resided. These states are: Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Kastina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara States. Shehu (2018) observed that these environmental degradations affect agricultural production and the amount of water for the human and animal used forcing the herdsmen and their cattle to move Southward in search of productive land. The effects of drought and desertification are vital for the herders who earn their lives from the soil itself. Water resources and productive grazing lands reduced in northern parts of the country which drifted the grazing routes of herders into more southern states.

The mass movement of herders and their cattle to Ondo state, a state with less than 16,000 land kilometer square and where a substantial number of its people are farmers had led to conflict between farmer and herders leading to loss of human lives and properties, destruction of farmlands, reduction in farm produce among others (Doyin,2017).

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### SOCIAL CONFLICT

Anthony Giddens (1979) defined conflict as a real struggle between acting people or groups regardless of the sources of this struggle, its method, and means used by each side. Conflicts can be classified into the area in accordance with areas of life into political, socio-economic, national, ethnic, e.t.c (Davydov,2008) Coser (2000) asserted that social conflict in society is inherent in the inevitable social inequality –i.e constant psychological dissatisfaction among its members –the tension between individuals and groups (emotion, mental illness). He further stated that social conflict is a tension between what the reality is and what should be in accordance with the views of particular social groups or individuals social conflict as a struggle for the values and claims to a certain status, power, and resources a struggle in which the objectives are to neutralize opponents damage to or destruction of the opponent (Coser,2000). According to Caser (1959) cited in Agbegbedia (2014), social conflict is defined as a struggle over values or claims to status power and scarce resources in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desires values but also, to neutralize, injure or to eliminate their rivals. He further stated that such conflicts could occur between persons, groups, or between person and groups which are bound to happen in every human society.

### FARMERS AND HERDSMEN CRISIS

The farmers –herdsmen conflict is one of the most intricate social problems affecting Nigeria’s survival as a nation, due to its intractable nature. It is difficult to ascertain when it would come to an end (Shehu,2018). Bello (2013) observed that conflict between farmers and herdsmen have been in existence since the beginning of agriculture and increased or decreased in intensity and frequency due to factors such as an increase in the herd sizes, due to improved conditions of the cattle, making pastoralists seek for more pastures beyond the ones freely available to them, thereby putting more pressure on the land resources.

The conflict has escalated in recent years as conflicting parties have easier access to arms and communication devices, collapsed of the old traditional negotiation mechanisms between the groups, therefore, the ones who have better equipment try to get what they want without talking to other parties (Gulsah,2019). The herdsmen have been known for the violence and attack of certain communities in the country, but the rate of attack has been on the increase in recent times (Alonge,2019). The violent conflict since 2000 caused thousands of deaths, the total number of casualties is unknown as often many bodies were not found in the bushes after violent clashes (Guisah,2019). Fulani herdsmen started their attacks on villages with weapons at the beginning of the 2000s (Genyi,2017). According to Amnesty International (2018), 312 incidents of attack and reprisal attacks were documented in 22 states and Abuja between January 2016 and October 2018. At least 3,641 people may have been killed, 406 injured 5,000 houses burnt down and 182,530 people displaced.

International Crisis Group (2017) claimed the conflicts between herdsmen and farmers have killed more people than the attack of the terrorist group Boko Haram in recent years. Amnesty International (2018) documented 57% of people died in the year 2018 in clashes between January 2016 and October 2018, 21% in 2017, and 22% in 2016. According to Institute for Economics and Peace cited in Alonge (2019) estimated 1,229 and 63 people have been killed through farmer-herders violence in 2014 and 2013 respectively. Adetula (2016) asserted that over 100 farmers and their families were killed in villages and refugee camps located in the Ukuraper, Gafa, and Tse-Gusa local government areas of Benue state in May 2015.

According to Lawalet *al.* (2018) the crisis between herdsmen and farmers has become worrisome as there have been several clashes between the two groups resulting in loss of lives and properties, displacement, and joblessness. The conflict got worsened in 2018 and the victims of the clashes only in this year were more than the total who died in 2016 and 2017 (Amnesty International, 2018).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### CONFLICT THEORY

Social conflict theory argues that individuals and groups within society interact on the basis of conflict rather than consensus. The theory was developed by Karl-Marx (1818-1883) and purports that due to society’s never-ending competition for limited resources, it will always be in a state of conflict. The implication of this theory is that those in possession of wealth and resources will protect and hoard those resources, while those without resources will do whatever they can to obtain them. This dynamic means there is a constant struggle between the have and the have not. Conflict theory is relevant in proving the evidence that competition for scarce and access to natural resources between farmers and harders gives rise to conflict. The shrinking of land use for grazing and climate change have drifted herdsmen to the Southern part of Nigeria in search of productive land. The land is communally owned in most parts of the South-Western States of Nigeria and Ondo State in particular. Land which is a valuable resource is the bone of contention in present-day tension and conflict between Fulani herdsmen and host communities.

Conflict usually occurs when herdsmen and their cattle intrude another person’s farm and feed their cattle with the crops of such farmers. Therefore, the conflicts begin when the two parties encounter on the same land and try to protect their own benefits (Genyi, 2017). While the herdsmen want to feed their cattle with grasses/crops which sometimes led to their cattle stray into farms, a farmer will not be calm and watches his means of livelihood being destroyed by herdsmen cattle. As a result of this, conflict is bound to ensure between the two parties. The main core of the conflict is the loss of the means of livelihood.

Caser (1959), sees conflict as a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values but also, to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals.

### SOCIO-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN FARMERS AND HERDSMEN IN ONDO STATE

Ondo State is a state in South-Western Nigeria. It was created in February 1976, from the former Western region. Ondo state borders Ekiti State to the north, Kogi State to the north-east, Edo State to the east, Delta State to the

Southwest, Osun State to the northwest, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. The capital of Ondo State is Akure and the state is predominantly a Yoruba-speaking state (Geography and Society, 2019). Ondo state has had its own fair share of conflicts between farmer and herdsmen leading to loss of lives, properties, and destruction of farmlands.

The proximity of Ondo state to Kogi state, a north-central state of Nigeria opened a floodgate for cattle herders fleeing criminalization of open grazing by some north-central states. In 2017, Benue state banned open grazing in its territory, everyone who let their animals graze freely like before is considered as committing an illegal activity and be taken to the court. However, herders find the law unfair and targeted them because it restricts them to doing grazing only in ranches or their own lands, which most of them do not have (Mc Donnell, NPR,2017). Many herdsmen fled from Benue state with their cattle and families after the enactment of this law and move to neighboring states where such law does not exist.

The mass migration of herdsmen to the Ondo state in search of pastures and water had triggered a conflict between the herders and farmers on one side and the communities where these migrating herdsmen settled on the other hands. The main thrust of the conflict is land. In most Yoruba-speaking southwestern states of Nigeria, the land is communally owned by the community/families. Such land is only released to members of such community or family for farming or any other activities on request. Pastoral nomad herdsmen do not believe that land is communally owned rather they understood land to be a gift from God to every human being living on it just like other natural phenomena such as air around us which could be breath by everyone without ownership or payment to breathe it (Babagana,2017). The perception of pastoral nomads on land to be a grazing field for the pastoralist, hunting ground for the hunters, farming ground for the farmers, trading routes for the traders, roads for the travelers, and a garden to the hunter, gatherers, or foragers with no one having any natural authority of claiming ownership in contrast to the perception of the Yoruba people of Ondo state.

As a result of these contrast perceptions between the farmers and the herdsman on land, the conflict has arisen leading to lost lives and properties. Farmers try to increase their agricultural lands which causes conflicts between them and the herders (Gulsah, 2019). Farmlands and crops get damaged during the encounter with cattle, as they just eat what they find, and sometimes the herdsmen are not able to control their animals, and sometimes they deliberately let the cattle graze in the growing farms. The unauthorized encroachment on farmlands by herdsmen and their cattle has led to a protracted conflict in several communities in Ondo state between the migrating pastoralists and farmers leading to loss of lives, cattle, and destruction of farmlands. The negative effects of the conflict in the agricultural sector of food state create a bigger problem of shortage of food supply, loss of jobs in the agricultural sector, and vicious

circle which the citizen is not able to get rid of by themselves (Ofuoku and Isife, 2010)

The enactment of the anti-open grazing law in some states in the north-central geopolitical zone of Nigeria has led to the fleeing of many herdsmen and their families to neighboring states. Many herders with their cattle and families were displaced and are forced to migrate to other regions. Ondo state is one of the states these migrating herdsmen move to and instead to settle with the local community, they could only find shelter in the reserved forest where their animals easily stray to destroy farmlands. This has put a strain on the relationship between the farmers and herdsmen on one hand and the communities around the forest reserve on the one other hands which have led to constant conflict between the two groups, thereby leading to loss of life and properties

Loss of grazing reserves in the northern region to encroachment has triggered a mass migration of nomad herdsmen toward the south in search of productive land and water. According to Adeoyo (2017) there already exist 415 grazing reserves in the country, unfortunately, most of those grazing reserves have been severely annexed or converted to farmlands. The loss of grazing reserves in the northern region encouraged the movement of herdsmen to the South where they could find productive land and water for their cattle. The movement of herdsmen to Ondo state in search of pastures and water for their cattle push them to cross the line and at the same time enters farmlands and this action sometimes ignites conflict between them and the farmers whose farmlands were destroyed.

Climate change has contributed to the mass movement of nomads herdsmen from northern parts of the country to the southern region. A report published by the FAO country programming framework (CPF) (2013-2017) revealed that 50-75 percent of the land areas of northeast and northwest states is becoming desert. Shortage of rainfall, drought, and desertification have necessitated the movement of herdsmen to the southern part of the country where the weather is a bit favorable and abundant availability of pastures (Olayoku, 2014). The movement of these nomads herdsmen outside their traditional and normal grazing route to the Southern part of Nigeria and Ondo state, in particular, has led to conflict between herdsmen and farmers. The fact that farmers leave their crops unfenced make them vulnerable for the animals to destroy and this ignites conflict between nomads herdsmen and farmers in Ondo State.

#### **INCIDENCES OF HERDSMEN AND FARMERS CONFLICT IN ONDO STATE**

The incidences of conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in Ondo State have become an issue of concern to well-meaning citizens of the state and the state government in particular. The conflict has led to mistrust between the Yoruba people of the Ondo State and the nomads Fulani herdsmen and insinuations have stated leveling the conflict as a deliberate attempt by the Fulani herdsmen to conquer the Yoruba people and forcefully taken over their lands.

**Table 1: Selected cases of conflicts between Herdsmen and farmers in Ondo State**

S/N	Nature of Conflict	Date of Conflict	Source of Information
1	Herdsmen invade Ondo Speaker's farm destroy cash crops	Feb. 27, 2018	<a href="http://www.punching.com/herdsmen-invade-in-Ondo-speaker's-farm-destroy-cash-crops/">http://www.punching.com/herdsmen-invade-in-Ondo-speaker's-farm-destroy-cash-crops/</a>
2	Two herdsmen arrested in Ondo over herdsmen /farmers clash in Ondo	May 7, 2018	<a href="http://Saharareporters.com/2018/05/7/two-herdsmen-arrested-in-Ondo-over-herdsmen-farmers-clash-in-Ondo/">http://Saharareporters.com/2018/05/7/two-herdsmen-arrested-in-Ondo-over-herdsmen-farmers-clash-in-Ondo/</a>
3	Herdsmen Attacks: Ondo farmers cry out, seek government, police intervention	January, 2020	<a href="http://www.businessday.ng/herdsmen-attacks-Ondo-State-Farmers-cry-out-seek-government-police-intervention/">www.businessday.ng/herdsmen-attacks-Ondo-State-Farmers-cry-out-seek-government-police-intervention/</a>
4	Herdsmen clash with Amotekun operatives after destroying farms in Ondo State	September 12, 2020	<a href="http://pulse-ng/herdsmen-with-Amotekun-operatives-after-destroying-farms-in-Ondo/">http://pulse-ng/herdsmen-with-Amotekun-operatives-after-destroying-farms-in-Ondo/</a>
5	Again, herdsmen set Falae's farm ablaze	November 23, 2020	<a href="http://Thenationlineng.net/again-herdsmen-set-falae's">http://Thenationlineng.net/again-herdsmen-set-falae's</a>
6	Herdsmen destroy farmlands in Ondo community	January 28 2021	<a href="http://www.Vanguarnarcom/herdsmen-destroy-farmland-in-ondo-community/">http://www.Vanguarnarcom/herdsmen-destroy-farmland-in-ondo-community/</a>
7	Herdsmen invade Ondo community kill OPC member, abduct farmer	Feb.4, 2021	<a href="http://www.vanguardngr.com/com/herdsmen-invade-ondo-community-kill-opc-member-abduct-farmer/">Http://www.vanguardngr.com/com/herdsmen-invade-ondo-community-kill-opc-member-abduct-farmer/</a>
8	Two killed as herders clash with Amotekun in Ondo	Feb12, 2021	<a href="http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headline/two-killed-as-herders-clash-with-amotekun-in-ondo.">Http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headline/two-killed-as-herders-clash-with-amotekun-in-ondo.</a>
9	Fulani Herdsmen kill three (3) farmers in Ondo	Feb. 14, 2021	<a href="http://sahara-reporters.com/2021/02/14/Fulani-herdsmen-kill-three-farmers-in-Ondo/">http://sahara-reporters.com/2021/02/14/Fulani-herdsmen-kill-three-farmers-in-Ondo/</a>
10	Herders drove us away built their huts on our farmland Ondo farmers	March 7, 2021	<a href="http://www.vanguard-com/herders-drove-us-away-built-their-huts-on-our-farmland-Ondo-farmers/">http://www.vanguard-com/herders-drove-us-away-built-their-huts-on-our-farmland-Ondo-farmers/</a>
11	Fulani herdsmen stab Ondo farmer into coma despite vacation order.	January 22, 2021	<a href="http://www.sahara-reporters.com/2021/01/22/Fulani-herdsmen-stab-ondo-farmer-into-coma-despite-vacation-order/">http://www.sahara-reporters.com/2021/01/22/Fulani-herdsmen-stab-ondo-farmer-into-coma-despite-vacation-order/</a>
12	Again, Fulani Herdsmen Strike In Ondo, Kill Cousin Of Akeredolu's media Aide in Ondo	February 5, 2021	<a href="http://www.dailypost.ng/2021/02/05/again-fulani-herdsmen-strike-in-ondo-kill-cousin-of-Akeredolu-media-aide-in-Ondo/">http://www.dailypost.ng/2021/02/05/again-fulani-herdsmen-strike-in-ondo-kill-cousin-of-Akeredolu-media-aide-in-Ondo/</a>

The above cases of conflict between Herdsmen and farmers in the Ondo state showed that there have been consistent conflicts between the two groups between years 2018-2021 leading to the loss of lives and crops.

#### **ONDO STATE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE CONFLICT SO FAR**

The Governor of Ondo State, Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu, SAN on Monday 8th January 2021 issued an ultimatum to herdsmen to vacate the forest reserves of the state within seven (7) days and bans night grazing. The ultimatum of the Governor generated a lot of reactions from many quarters. While the presidency through Garba Shehu, the Senior Special Assistant to President Muhammadu Buhari on media and publicity faulted the Governor's move to eject herdsmen from the forest reserves of the state, the Pan Yoruba socio-cultural group, Afenife applauded the action of the Governor and call for a total ban of open grazing in South-Western states so as to avoid constant conflict between herdsmen and farmers.

On Thursday, February 11, 2021, the Ondo State Government through the State Commissioner for Justice and Attorney General, Sir Charles Titiloye announced that a bill for rearing and grazing of livestock has been approved to be forwarded to the Ondo State House of Assembly. The bill contains the following:

1. the establishment of ranches and grazing area
2. ensuring healthy breeding of livestock
3. employment of modern techniques of animal husbandry in the state and

4. banning of the bearing of guns and other ammunitions by herders in the state

The focus and major highlight of the bill was to prevent decades-long conflict over access and control of land between the nomadic cattle herders and local farming communities in the state that has led to thousands of lives and cost million worth of property damage.

The aftermath of the expiration of the seven(7) days quit notice given to herdsmen to vacate the forest reserves of the state by the Ondo State Government, the Nigeria Governors' Forum led by its chairman, Dr. Kayode Fayemi (Ekiti States), Seyi Makinde (Oyo State), Gboyega Oyetola (Osun State) and Rotimi Akeredolu of Ondo State met with the leadership of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), security agencies and other stakeholders on 25th January, 2021 at the International Centre for Culture and Events, Alagbaka, Akure Ondo state to find a lasting solution to the incessant conflict between herdsmen and farmers in the southwest geo-political zone of the country. The meeting discussed vigorously and resolved that.

1. The security and welfare of the people of Nigeria is the primary purpose of government as enshrined in the 1999 constitution of Nigeria as amended
2. The stakeholders are committed to the unity and indivisibility of Nigeria

3. Insecurity is a national challenge and not peculiar to any tribe or region but must be addressed by the cooperation of all.
4. The order of the Ondo state Governor was misconstrued and misrepresented by a sector of the media. He only ordered those occupying the forest reserves in Ondo state illegally to quit
5. Criminal should be apprehended and punished, no matter their origin, class, or status
6. Security agencies have been trying to stem the tide of criminality in the country but must step up their efforts in the fight
7. There is a need to build a partnership for peace and security with MACBAN and jointly wage war against criminality
8. No one has sent anyone away from any state or region but all hands must be on deck to fight criminality
9. MACBAN is a peace-loving, law-abiding organization that does not harbor or condone criminals and agreed that.
  - A. Night grazing should be banned henceforth
  - B. Under age herding is inimical to security and hence be banned
  - C. Occupation of state forest reserves illegally is condemned
10. MACBAN also suffers insecurity and kidnapping and thus desire peaceful coexistence
11. MACBAN is ready for any peaceful move by the states to engender security
12. Fake news is another issue that makes our security worse than solving it
13. There must be an enduring framework with MACBAN in a way that will help address security issues
14. That free-range grazing must be stopped to avoid conflict between the farmers and the herders
15. Strengthening an alternative security arrangement and make them complementary to the mainstream security agencies in Nigeria
16. MACBAN should embrace and be committed to the modern breeding process by creating grazing reserves and practice ranching to prevent cattle from roaming about
17. Standing committee comprising of farmers, MACBAN, and the government should be set up in each state (where they don't exist) to ensure synergy and result
18. We must create economic opportunities for our people and reduce opportunities for criminalities in our country (Premium Times, 2021)

### CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONFLICT

The conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in Ondo State have a direct impact on the survival of those involved. The conflict disrupts the production of food for the people and raw materials for the manufacturing sector in Ondo state and Nigeria (De Haan, 2002). The major food production hubs in Ondo State are the Akoko and Ose areas in Ondo North senatorial district and the Ogbese-Eleyewo-Ilu Abo areas of Akure North in Ondo Central senatorial district. These areas

have witnessed more conflicts between herdsmen and farmers such that food productions in those areas are disrupted.

The conflict also contributes to the high rate of poverty and starvation. Most farmers in Ondo state practice subsistence farming methods i.e. farming for consumption. The constant conflict between herdsmen and farmers as a result of the destruction of farm crops by cattle not only increase the rate of poverty because most of these farmers' means of livelihood are being destroyed also starvation occurs from the inability of farmers to produce enough to eat.

Another consequence of the conflict is the general loss of lives and properties. A lot of farmers and herdsmen died as a result of the conflict between herdsmen and farmers (Ezieh and Ekezue, 2017). The Ondo States has recorded its own fair share of a general loss of lives and properties as occasioned by the violent conflict between herdsmen and farmers.

The conflict also led to internal displacement and social disorganization amongst the families. During a violent clash between Herdsmen and farmers in Eleyewo village, Akure North Local Government, Ondo State, many farmers fled their homes, displaced, and seek refuge in other places. Farmers who seek refuge in other places as a result of being displaced from their homes due to conflict between Herdsmen and farmers usually get very poor as they have no income to sustain themselves and their families (International Crisis Group, 2017).

The conflict led to mistrust among the Herdsmen and farmers some of who have lived together for so many years. The frequency of the conflicts between herdsmen and farmers has led to an insinuation that the conflict is a deliberate attempt by the herdsmen, who are mostly Fulani to conquered and take Yoruba people's land. The mistrust has made it practically impossible to resolve a disagreement between the two groups- i.e. Herdsmen and farmers without resorting to violence thereby leading to loss of lives and properties.

### POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO END THE CONFLICT BETWEEN HERDSMEN AND FARMERS IN ONDO STATE

It is not possible to solve such a complex and protracted conflict with a few measures from the government and stakeholders. In order to come out with possible solutions to end the conflict between Herdsmen and farmers in Ondo State, the following recommendations can be adopted.

1. Restoration of traditional negotiation mechanism between the herdsmen and farmers which usually involve the heads of villages and herders communities agreed on simple solutions such as a herder must compensate the damage in a farm if the herder could not control his animals and prevent them damaging the growing crops.
2. Since the police and other security agencies are not equally spread over the land and especially in rural areas, synergy must be sustained among them to ensure that reported cases of animals destroying farms are duly investigated, offenders prosecuted if the need may be, effective policing and preventing measures to nip in the budding conflict between the herdsmen and farmers. Also, security agencies should share intelligence to prevent illegal armament and end the flow of illegal arms to either group.

3. Establishment and resuscitation of abandoned cattle grazing reserves so that herdsmen would stop roaming with their cow. This will greatly reduce the incidences of cattle stray into farmlands and destroying growing crops and would reduce conflict. The Federal Government grazing reserve Act of 1964 should be revived so that the already demarcated 415 grazing reserves in the country should be traced and allocated to the herdsmen. The creation of grazing reserves seems to be the viable solution, which means shifting from the old system of animal husbandry to a modern method (Musa *et al.*,2016).
4. Establishment of joint farmers-Herdsmen forum to facilitate proper dissemination of information towards curbing the constant conflicts. Ondo State Government should create a joint forum comprising members of the Ondo State chapter of All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) and Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN) so that these two groups could have regularly interfaced where issues relating to the destruction of farms by cattle, disagreements over the right to a water source and proper dissemination of information are discussed
5. The bill for rearing and grazing of livestock transmitted to the Ondo State House of Assembly by the Governor of the State be expeditiously debated and passed by the Assembly to give policy direction on rearing and grazing of livestock and penalties for anybody who violated the law in the state.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the socio-cultural analysis of the conflict between the herdsmen and farmers in Ondo state. Various socio-cultural issues such as land ownership, climate change i.e. drought and desertification, loss of grazing reserves, and ban on open grazing by some states government in the North Central Geo-political zone and the consequences of the conflict in Ondo state were adequately captured and discussed. It was observed that the protracted conflict between herdsmen and farmers leading to loss of lives and incredible economic losses not only among the warring parties-i.e. herdsmen and farmers but also on the innocent people is not a recent phenomenon in Nigeria, but the spreading of the conflict to Southern parts of the country from the prevalent Northern parts has made the conflict more intractable, as it has always been activities of cattle rustling and arm bandit.

Consequences were outlined which include mistrust among the two warring parties- i.e. herdsmen and farmers and the likelihood of what may lead to a shortage of food, poverty, and social disorganization. The rate at which human lives are lost to the violent herdsmen-farmers conflict has assumed an alarming dimension. The insinuation that the conflict is a general plan and attempt by the herdsmen to conquer and forcefully taken overland is a clear indication that the crisis has now taken a dangerous dimension which has negative consequences for the survival and peaceful co-existence of the country.

The herdsmen and farmers must therefore embrace tolerance and peace in order to provide a conducive environment for food security and sustain peaceful co-existence between the two groups in Ondo state. Further research can be conducted on the causes and consequences of the herdsmen and farmers conflict as this study is limited to the socio-cultural analysis

of the conflict between the two groups in Ondo State. The recommendations of this paper will help Ondo state Government and policymakers to come out with a solution to the herdsmen and farmers conflict.

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