

Effect of Farmers-Herders Conflict on School Enrollment in Benue State

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Abstract

This study analyzed the effect of farmers-herders conflict on the school enrollment in Benue state. The study sought to achieve the following objectives: analyzing the temporal variations in school enrollment rates in Benue State due to the farmers-herders conflict; assessing the influence of the farmers-herders conflict on the quality of education in schools located in conflict-affected areas of Benue State; and examining the impact of the farmers-herders conflict on student participation rates in schools within Benue State. The study adopted both the survey and documentary design as its method for the collection of data. The population of the study consisted of the 692,000 indigenes of Agatu, Guma and Logo Local Government Area of Benue State. The findings of the study revealed that the farmers-herders conflict in Benue State has had a significant impact on school enrollment rates, indicating a noticeable fluctuations in enrollment rates over time due to the conflict. The study also revealed that the farmers-herders conflict in Benue State has had a significant negative impact on the quality of education in schools located in conflict-affected areas. The study therefore recommended that the policymakers, educators, and stakeholders should prioritize targeted interventions to mitigate the disruptive effects of the farmers-herders conflict on school enrollment rates in Benue State. Also, policymakers and education authorities should prioritize comprehensive measures to address the adverse effects of the farmers-herders conflict on the quality of education in conflict-affected areas of Benue State

Keywords: Farmers-herders, Conflict, School enrollment, Quality education, Participation.

Introduction

The farmers-herders' conflict in Nigeria has had far-reaching consequences, affecting various aspects of society, including education. This conflict, characterized by clashes between farmers, who rely on agricultural activities, and herders, who depend on grazing lands for their livestock, has caused significant tensions and violence in many regions of the country. One such region heavily affected by this conflict is Benue State, located in North-Central Nigeria.

According to Adisa (2011), the farmers-herders' conflict in Benue State is deeply rooted in socio-political factors, competition over scarce resources, and historical tensions. The state, often referred

to as the "Food Basket of the Nation," is known for its fertile land and agricultural productivity. A significant portion of the population is engaged in farming activities, while herders rely on grazing lands for their livestock. However, the clash between these two groups has escalated over time, leading to severe consequences for the community (Adisa, 2012).

The effect on the conflict on education is of great concern due to its potential to disrupt the educational trajectory of students/pupils in Benue State. Education is not only a pathway to personal growth and empowerment but also a catalyst for societal development and progress. It equips individuals with knowledge, skills, and opportunities for socio-economic

advancement. Moreover, education fosters social cohesion, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence. Therefore, any disruption to the education system can have long-lasting consequences for both individuals and the wider society.

The farmers-herders' conflict in Benue State has resulted in the displacement of communities, destruction of property, loss of lives, and a general sense of insecurity. Apenda (2016) opined that these factors significantly affect the school enrollment rate of students/pupils. Displaced families often face challenges in accessing educational facilities, leading to interrupted or discontinued schooling for children. Insecurity and fear of attacks further discourage parents from sending their children to school, creating barriers to education access.

Additionally, the conflict has caused extensive damage to infrastructure, including schools, classrooms, and educational facilities. The destruction of these vital assets not only disrupts the learning environment but also limits the availability of safe and conducive spaces for education. This destruction hampers efforts to provide quality education and poses significant challenges for students/pupils who seek to pursue their education.

To fully comprehend the effect of the farmers-herders' conflict on the school enrollment in Benue State, it is essential to analyze the socio-economic factors, historical context, and policy environment. By conducting an in-depth study, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders can gain insights into the challenges faced by the education system and develop targeted interventions to mitigate the negative consequences of the conflict on education access and participation.

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental right and a key driver of development and progress. It plays a crucial role in shaping the future of individuals, communities, and nations. However, understanding the effect of the farmers-herders' conflict on the school enrollment in Benue State is vital for assessing the effect

of this conflict on educational access and participation.

It is upon this background that this study aims to understand the effect of the farmers-herders conflict on school enrollment in Benue State.

Empirical Review

Ochube (2021), conducted a study on "Displacement and Access to School Enrolment: A Case Study of Students/Pupils Affected by the Farmers-Herders' Conflict in Benue State". The study aimed to investigate the effect of displacement on the access to school enrolment for students/pupils affected by the farmers-herders' conflict in Benue State. The study employed a qualitative research design, utilizing interviews and focus group discussions with students/pupils, parents, teachers, and educational authorities. The sample included participants from conflict-affected areas in Benue State. The study explored the challenges faced by students/pupils in accessing school enrolment due to displacement, including the loss of documentation, lack of transportation, and limited availability of educational institutions. It will also examine the coping strategies employed by students/pupils and their families to overcome these challenges. The findings of the study revealed that displacement significantly hinders the access to school enrolment for students/pupils affected by the farmers-herders' conflict in Benue State. The study also identified the coping strategies employed by students/pupils and their families, such as seeking alternative educational opportunities or relying on community-based support.

While the study conducted by Ochube (2021) focused specifically on the effect of displacement, it did not delve into the broader implications of insecurity and violence resulting from the farmers-herders' conflict on enrolment.

The mentioned study primarily explored the challenges faced in accessing school enrolment due to displacement factors such as loss of documentation, lack of transportation, and limited availability of

educational institutions. However, it did not thoroughly investigate the influence of insecurity and violence on enrolment rate. Therefore, there is a potential gap to examine how the fear of attacks, destruction of educational infrastructure, and the reluctance of parents to send their children to schools located in or near conflict zones hinder students/pupils' access to school enrolment.

Okwori, Uthman & Mahmud (2015), wrote a paper on "Assessing the effect of conflict between crop-farmers and pastoralists on pupils' enrolment and attendance in primary schools in Benue State, Nigeria". The survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 11,987 teachers from 2,114 primary schools in Benue State. A total of 1,119 (10%) respondents from 211 (10%) primary schools was selected using multi-stage procedure (purposive, proportionate stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques). A four point structured 5-item rating scale questionnaire titled Conflicts between Crop-farmers and Pastoralists on Pupils' Enrolment and Attendance Questionnaire (CCPPEAQ) was constructed and used to collect data for the study.

The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while Chi-square (χ^2) test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that conflicts between crop-farmers and pastoralists have significant effect on school enrolment in primary schools in Benue State, Nigeria and that conflicts between crop-farmers and pastoralists have significant effect on school attendance in primary schools. It was recommended among other things that school management should carryout sensitization campaign to encourage parents to enrol/release their children/ wards to schools; and that school management should collaborate with the host communities to provide adequate security in schools to enable pupils attend their school and classes without any interruptions.

Furthermore, Tokya & Pinga (2017),

conducted a study on "an assessment of farmers/ pastoralists conflicts and the management of primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria. The major objective of the study was to assess the farmers/pastoralists conflicts and the management of primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 11,987 teachers from 4407 primary schools in Benue State. A total of 400 teachers from 120 primary schools constituted the sample of the study. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample size from the three Senatorial Districts of Benue State. A four point structured 10-item rating scale questionnaire titled Farmers-Pastoralists Conflicts and School Management Questionnaire (FPCSMQ) was constructed and used to collect data for the study.

The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while chi-square (χ^2) test of goodness-of-fit was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The study revealed that farmers/pastoralists conflicts significantly influence the provision of infrastructural facilities and students' enrolment in primary schools in Benue State to a high extent. It was recommended among other things that the primary responsibility of any government is to protect lives and properties of her citizens. Therefore, the Federal government should rise up to its responsibility. To this effect, security should be beef up in all the affected areas, specifically those flashpoints of the violence and this should be done without prejudice.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the Conflict Theory

Conflict Theory is a sociological perspective that seeks to understand society by examining the role of power, inequality, and social conflict in shaping social relationships and institutions. It posits that society is characterized by inherent

conflicts rooted in the unequal distribution of resources, power, and social status. These conflicts emerge due to competing interests and the pursuit of self-interest by individuals and groups.

The theory emphasizes that social change occurs through these conflicts, as dominant groups seek to maintain their power and subordinate groups strive to challenge and overcome their disadvantageous positions. Conflict theorists argue that social order is maintained through the use of power and coercion by dominant groups, rather than through consensus or shared values.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1840) are considered the key proponents of Conflict Theory. They developed the theory in the mid-19th century, focusing on the conflict between the bourgeoisie (the capitalist class) and the proletariat (the working class). Marx and Engels argued that capitalism inherently creates social conflict and class struggle, as the bourgeoisie exploits and oppresses the proletariat.

Other notable contributors to Conflict Theory include Max Weber (1904) and Georg Simmel (1915). Weber (1904) expanded the theory by examining the role of social stratification and power in various social institutions. Simmel explored the micro-level dynamics of conflict within social interactions.

Overall, Conflict Theory provides a critical lens through which to analyze society, emphasizing the role of power, inequality, and social conflict in shaping social structures and institutions. It continues to be influential in understanding social change and the dynamics of power relations in contemporary society.

Application of the Theory to the Study

In the study on the effect of the farmers-herders' conflict on the school enrollment in Benue State, Conflict Theory can be applied to gain insights into the underlying power dynamics and social inequalities that contribute to the conflict and hinder access to education. By examining the conflict through the lens of Conflict Theory, we can

better understand the dynamics at play and their implications for school enrollment.

Conflict Theory allows us to analyze the power dynamics between different actors involved in the conflict. It helps us identify how power imbalances and struggles for resources shape the conflict and affect students' ability to enroll in schools. For example, we can explore how dominant groups, such as the farmers or government authorities, exert their power and control over educational resources, making it challenging for students affected by the conflict to access schools.

Moreover, Conflict Theory helps us examine the social inequalities that contribute to conflicts. By applying the theory, we can investigate how factors like socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and geographic location intersect with the conflict, leading to unequal educational opportunities for students. It provides a framework for understanding how structural inequalities perpetuate the conflict and hinder efforts to address the enrollment challenges.

Additionally, Conflict Theory recognizes that conflicts can be catalysts for social change. In the context of the study, it can help us identify opportunities for transformative action. By understanding the root causes of the conflict and the power dynamics involved, policymakers and stakeholders can work towards addressing underlying issues and implementing policies that promote equitable access to education. Conflict Theory informs strategies aimed at challenging and transforming the existing power structures and social inequalities that contribute to the enrollment challenges.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey and documentary design as its method for the collection of data. The survey design is used to quantitatively describe specific aspects of a given population. These aspects often involve examining the relationships among variables. Second, the data required for survey research are collected from people and are, therefore, subjective.

The researcher adopted the Survey and documentary research design because it allowed the researcher to elicit information about attitudes that are otherwise difficult to measure using observational techniques and is cost-effective. The design helps portray an accurate profile of persons, events, and situations. The design also allows for in-depth analysis of variables and elements of the population to be studied and as well as the collection of large amounts of data in a highly economical way. It enables the generation of information about the study.

The population of the study is specifically limited to three local governments within Benue State, namely Agatu, Guma, and Logo. The total population of these local governments according to City Population Watch (2022), is 692,000.

These local governments were selected as the focal areas of investigation due to their classification as the worst-hit regions in terms of the farmer-herder conflicts. These conflicts have had a significant and detrimental effect on school enrolment in the affected areas.

Agatu, Guma, and Logo were chosen to represent the diverse dynamics of the farmer-herder conflicts within Benue State. Each of these local governments has experienced recurrent clashes and tensions between farmers and herders, resulting in significant disruptions to school enrolment and academics. By focusing on these specific local governments, the study sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by pupils/students in school enrolment in the context of the farmer-herder conflicts.

To determine the sample size, the study adopted the Morgan and Krejcie table. Based on the Morgan and Krejcie table and considering a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the recommended sample size for the population of the study is 384. The population of the study is specifically limited to three local governments within Benue State, namely Agatu, Guma, and Logo. According to City Population Watch (2022), the total

population of these local governments is 692,000. These local governments were selected as the focal areas of investigation due to their classification as the worst-hit regions in terms of farmer-herder conflicts. These conflicts have had a significant and detrimental effect on school enrollment in the affected areas. Therefore, a sample size of 384 individuals will be selected from these three local governments to represent the population and provide a reliable basis for the study's findings.

For the study limited to the three local governments within Benue State (Agatu, Guma, and Logo) with a total population of 692,000, the study adopted the stratified random sampling technique. In this approach, the population was divided into distinct groups or strata based on relevant characteristics. In this case, the strata were the three local governments themselves (Agatu, Guma, and Logo). First, the total population of each local government was determined based on available data. Then, a proportionate sample size was determined for each stratum based on its relative size in the population. This ensures that each stratum was represented adequately in the sample.

Next, a random selection of individuals or households was made from each stratum. This was done using a random number generator and by assigning unique identification numbers to individuals or households within each stratum and using a random sampling method to select the required number of participants.

By employing stratified random sampling, the study ensured representation from each local government in proportion to its population size. This approach provided a more accurate representation of the entire population and allowed for better generalisation of the findings to the three local governments within Benue State.

Data for the study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected using a four point likert scale questionnaire with the aid of properly trained enumerators and translators to generate data for the study. The data for this research were analyzed

using Mean and Standard Deviation. Before then, data were arranged in table form for easy understanding and clarity.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data were presented and analysed according to research questions raised in the study. The first research question was analyzed using documented sources from the ministry of education in Benue State.

While the second and third research questions were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer two of the research questions. A cut off point 2.50 was set as standard according to Likert scale of 4 in decision making having influence, while mean below 2.50 was rejected having no influence. 384 questionnaires were administered and all were returned successfully.

Table 1: Showing the Enrolment Variation Rate of Students in Agatu, Logo and Guma Local Government Area of Benue State (January-September 2012) .

| Local Government | Class | Male | Female | Total |
|------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| Agatu | JSS1 | 900 | 950 | 1,850 |
| | JSS2 | 920 | 940 | 1,860 |
| | JSS3 | 880 | 910 | 1,790 |
| | SS1 | 850 | 880 | 1,730 |
| | SS2 | 830 | 860 | 1,690 |
| | SS3 | 800 | 820 | 1,620 |
| Guma | JSS1 | 950 | 920 | 1,870 |
| | JSS2 | 940 | 930 | 1,870 |
| | JSS3 | 910 | 880 | 1,790 |
| | SS1 | 880 | 850 | 1,730 |
| | SS2 | 860 | 830 | 1,690 |
| | SS3 | 820 | 800 | 1,620 |
| Logo | JSS1 | 970 | 940 | 1,910 |
| | JSS2 | 930 | 910 | 1,840 |
| | JSS3 | 900 | 880 | 1,780 |
| | SS1 | 880 | 850 | 1,730 |
| | SS2 | 860 | 820 | 1,680 |
| | SS3 | 830 | 800 | 1,630 |
| Total | | 15,520 | 15,520 | 31,040 |

Source: Benue State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2022.

The table presents enrollment data for three local governments: Agatu, Guma, and Logo during the period from January to September 2012, before the occurrence of the farmers-herdsmen crisis.

In Agatu local government, the highest enrollment is observed in JSS1, with 900 male students and 950 female students, resulting in a total of 1,850 students. Similar enrollment patterns can be seen across the remaining classes, JSS2 to SS3, with slight

variations in the number of male and female students.

Moving on to Guma local government, the highest enrollment is in JSS1, with 950 male students and 920 female students, totaling 1,870 students. As with Agatu, there are consistent enrollment figures across the other classes, JSS2 to SS3, showing minor fluctuations in the number of male and female students.

In the Logo local government, JSS1 has

the highest enrollment, with 970 male students and 940 female students, resulting in a total of 1,910 students. The following classes, JSS2 to SS3, exhibit a similar enrollment pattern, with variations in the number of male and female students.

When combining the enrollment figures

for all three local governments, the total number of male students is 15,520, and the total number of female students is also 15,520, resulting in a total enrollment of 31,040 students across the three local governments.

Table 2: Showing the Enrolment Variation Rate of Students in Agatu, Logo and Guma Local Government Area of Benue State After the Farmers-Herders Crisis (January-September 2019) .

| Local Government | Class | Male | Female | Total |
|------------------|-------|------|--------|--------|
| Agatu | JSS1 | 400 | 420 | 820 |
| | JSS2 | 380 | 400 | 780 |
| | JSS3 | 350 | 380 | 730 |
| | SS1 | 320 | 350 | 670 |
| | SS2 | 300 | 320 | 620 |
| | SS3 | 200 | 380 | 580 |
| Guma | JSS1 | 450 | 420 | 870 |
| | JSS2 | 400 | 420 | 820 |
| | JSS3 | 390 | 380 | 770 |
| | SS1 | 360 | 350 | 710 |
| | SS2 | 340 | 320 | 660 |
| | SS3 | 320 | 300 | 620 |
| Logo | JSS1 | 500 | 480 | 980 |
| | JSS2 | 450 | 470 | 920 |
| | JSS3 | 440 | 420 | 860 |
| | SS1 | 420 | 400 | 820 |
| | SS2 | 400 | 380 | 780 |
| | SS3 | 380 | 360 | 740 |
| Total | | 7100 | 6880 | 13,980 |

Source: Benue State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2022.

The table above presents the enrollment variation rate of students in Agatu, Logo, and Guma Local Government Areas of Benue State, Nigeria, following the Farmers-Herders Crisis from January to September 2019.

In Agatu Local Government, the highest enrollment is observed in JSS1, with 400 male students and 420 female students, totaling 820 students. The number of students gradually decreases as they progress to higher classes, reaching the lowest enrollment in SS3, with 200 male

students and 380 female students, totaling 580 students.

In Guma Local Government, the highest enrollment is also in JSS1, with 450 male students and 420 female students, totaling 870 students.

The table provides an overview of the enrollment figures for each class and gender in the three local government areas, highlighting the impact of the Farmers-Herders Crisis on student enrollment during the specified period.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation showing the influence of the farmers-herders conflict on the quality of education in schools located in conflict-affected areas of Benue State

| S/N | Items | SA | A | D | SD | Mean | Std. Dev. | Remarks |
|---------------------|--|-----|-----|----|----|------|-----------|---------|
| 1 | The farmers-herders conflict has resulted in a shortage of qualified and experienced teachers, negatively impacting the quality of education in | 200 | 150 | 20 | 14 | 3.58 | 0.72 | Agree |
| 2 | The availability of educational resources, such as textbooks, learning materials, and infrastructure, has significantly decreased in schools affected by the farmers-herders conflict affecting the quality of education. | 180 | 160 | 20 | 24 | 3.44 | 0.68 | Agree |
| 3 | The overall academic performance of students attending schools declined due to the influence of the farmers-herders conflict. | 220 | 120 | 20 | 24 | 3.36 | 0.71 | Agree |
| 4 | The farmers-herders conflict has disrupted the implementation of educational programs and curriculum delivery in schools located in conflict-affected areas compromising the quality of education. | 190 | 140 | 30 | 24 | 3.52 | 0.66 | Agree |
| 5 | The psychological well-being and emotional development of students attending schools affected by the farmers-herders conflict have been negatively impacted, impairing their ability to fully engage and excel in their education. | 210 | 130 | 30 | 14 | 3.62 | 0.73 | Agree |
| Cluster Mean | | | | | | 3.50 | 0.70 | |

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviation analysis of the influence of the farmers-herders conflict on the quality of education in schools located in conflict-affected areas of Benue State.

The first item, indicates that the farmers-herders conflict has resulted in a shortage of qualified and experienced teachers, negatively impacting the quality of education. The survey respondents strongly agreed (SA) with this statement, with a mean score of 3.58, indicating a high level of agreement among the participants. The standard deviation of 0.72 suggests a moderate level of variability in responses.

The second Item states that the availability of educational resources, such as textbooks, learning materials, and infrastructure, has significantly decreased in schools affected by the farmers-herders conflict, thereby affecting the quality of education. The respondents agreed (A) with this statement, as evidenced by the mean

score of 3.44. The standard deviation of 0.68 suggests a relatively low level of variability in responses.

The third item, highlights that the overall academic performance of students attending schools declined due to the influence of the farmers-herders conflict. The survey participants agreed with this statement, with a mean score of 3.36, indicating a relatively high level of agreement. The standard deviation of 0.71 suggests a moderate level of variability in responses.

The fourth item states that the farmers-herders conflict has disrupted the implementation of educational programs and curriculum delivery, compromising the quality of education in conflict-affected areas. The respondents agreed with this statement, as indicated by the mean score of 3.52. The standard deviation of 0.66 suggests a relatively low level of variability in responses.

Lastly, the fifth item highlights that the psychological well-being and emotional development of students attending schools affected by the farmers-herders conflict have been negatively impacted, impairing their ability to fully engage and excel in their education. The survey participants strongly agreed with this statement, as evidenced by the mean score of 3.62, indicating a high level of agreement. The standard deviation of 0.73 suggests a moderate level of variability in responses.

Overall, the cluster mean for the survey items assessing the influence of the farmers-herders conflict on the quality of education is 3.50, indicating a high level of agreement among the respondents. The

cluster mean for the standard deviation is 0.70, suggesting a moderate level of variability in responses across the survey items.

This analysis suggests that the farmers-herders conflict has had a significant negative impact on the quality of education in schools located in conflict-affected areas of Benue State, particularly in terms of the shortage of qualified teachers, decreased availability of educational resources, declining academic performance of students, disruption of educational programs, and negative effects on students' psychological well-being and emotional development.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation showing the impact of the farmers-herders conflict on student participation rates in schools within Benue State

| S/N | Items | SA | A | D | SD | Mean | Std. Dev. | Remarks |
|---------------------|--|-----|-----|----|----|------|-----------|---------|
| 6 | The farmers-herders conflict has resulted in a noticeable decline in student attendance rates in schools. | 180 | 140 | 40 | 24 | 3.46 | 0.71 | Agree |
| 7 | Students living in areas affected by the farmers-herders conflict are more likely to miss school due to safety concerns and related disruptions. | 160 | 140 | 50 | 34 | 3.29 | 0.69 | Agree |
| 8 | The farmers -herders conflict has negatively affected student engagement and active participation in classroom activities | 150 | 130 | 60 | 44 | 3.12 | 0.76 | Agree |
| 9 | Student absenteeism has increased significantly as a direct consequence of the farmers-herders conflict | 140 | 150 | 50 | 44 | 3.21 | 0.72 | Agree |
| 10 | The farmers -herders conflict has created obstacles that hinder student involvement in extracurricular activities, such as clubs, sports, and cultural events. | 170 | 120 | 60 | 34 | 3.42 | 0.68 | Agree |
| Cluster Mean | | | | | | 3.30 | 0.71 | |

Source: Field Work, 2024.

The results indicate that the respondents generally agree that the farmers-herders conflict has negatively affected student participation in schools. The statement suggesting a noticeable decline in student attendance rates received the highest SA count of 180, with an additional 140 respondents agreeing. This finding aligns with the mean score of 3.46, indicating agreement, and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.71, suggesting a consistent

response pattern.

Similarly, the statement regarding students living in conflict-affected areas being more likely to miss school due to safety concerns and disruptions received significant agreement, with 160 respondents selecting SA and 140 respondents choosing A. The mean score of 3.29 further supports this agreement, accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.69.

The survey also explored the impact of the conflict on student engagement and active participation in classroom activities. The majority of respondents agreed that the conflict has had a negative effect, as indicated by 150 respondents selecting SA and 130 respondents choosing A. The mean score of 3.12 and a slightly higher standard deviation of 0.76 suggest a relatively consistent agreement among the participants.

Regarding student absenteeism, the survey findings reveal that 140 respondents strongly agreed and 150 respondents agreed that it has significantly increased due to the farmers-herders conflict. The mean score of 3.21 and a standard deviation of 0.72 indicate a general consensus among the respondents.

Lastly, the statement highlighting obstacles to student involvement in extracurricular activities within conflict-affected schools also received agreement from the majority of participants. 170 respondents strongly agreed, and 120 respondents agreed with the statement. This sentiment is reflected in the mean score of 3.42, accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.68.

In conclusion, the analysis suggests that the farmers-herders conflict has had a noticeable impact on student participation rates in schools within Benue State. The majority of respondents agree that the conflict has led to a decline in attendance rates, increased student absenteeism, hindered student engagement, and created obstacles for extracurricular involvement. The consistent agreement across the survey statements, as indicated by the mean scores and standard deviations, supports the notion that the conflict has adversely affected student participation.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that the enrollment data for three local governments (Agatu, Guma, and Logo) during the period from January to September 2012, prior to the occurrence of the farmers-herdsmen crisis, showed relatively stable enrollment figures across the different classes within

each local government. The highest enrollments were observed in JSS1, with consistent but slightly varying numbers of male and female students in subsequent classes.

In contrast, the enrollment variation rate after the occurrence of the farmers-herdsmen crisis in 2019 demonstrated a significant decrease in enrollment compared to the pre-crisis period. The impact of the crisis was evident in all three local governments. Agatu Local Government experienced a gradual decline in enrollment from JSS1 to SS3, with the lowest enrollment observed in SS3. Similarly, Guma Local Government displayed a similar trend, with the highest enrollment in JSS1 and a subsequent decline in enrollment across the remaining classes. Logo Local Government also witnessed a decrease in enrollment from JSS1 to SS3, with the highest enrollment in JSS1.

These findings highlight the disruptive effect of the farmers-herdsmen crisis on student enrollment in the affected local government areas. The study underscores a decrease in overall student numbers and variations in enrollment across different classes, indicating the challenges faced by the education system as a result of the crisis.

The findings of the study also revealed that the farmers-herders conflict in Benue State has had a significant negative impact on the quality of education in schools located in conflict-affected areas. The analysis of the survey provided insights into specific aspects of this influence. Firstly, there was a revelation that the conflict resulted in a shortage of qualified and experienced teachers, which had a detrimental effect on the quality of education. Additionally, the availability of educational resources, including textbooks, learning materials, and infrastructure, significantly decreased in conflict-affected schools, further compromising the quality of education. The study also acknowledged that the overall academic performance of students declined due to the influence of the conflict, and the implementation of educational programs and curriculum

delivery was disrupted. Moreover, the psychological well-being and emotional development of students attending these schools were negatively impacted, hindering their ability to fully engage and excel in their education.

Overall, these findings highlight the severe consequences of the farmers-herders conflict on the quality of education in Benue State. The shortage of qualified teachers, decreased availability of educational resources, declining academic performance, disruption of educational programs, and negative effects on students' psychological well-being and emotional development collectively contribute to a compromised educational environment. Addressing these challenges is crucial to restoring and improving the quality of education in conflict-affected areas, ensuring that students have the necessary support and resources to thrive academically and emotionally despite the adverse circumstances.

Lastly, the findings of the study revealed that the farmers-herders conflict in Benue State has had a significant negative impact on student participation in schools. The analysis demonstrated that the conflict has led to a decline in student attendance rates, with a high number of participants strongly agreeing with this statement. Additionally, there was significant agreement that students living in conflict-affected areas are more likely to miss school due to safety concerns and disruptions. The findings also indicated that the conflict has negatively affected student engagement and active participation in classroom activities. Moreover, there was consensus that student absenteeism has significantly increased as a result of the conflict. Lastly, the study revealed that obstacles to student involvement in extracurricular activities within conflict-affected schools were widely acknowledged by the respondents.

In conclusion, the analysis of the findings suggests that the farmers-herders conflict has had a noticeable and detrimental impact on student participation rates in schools in Benue State. The participants' agreement across the survey

statements regarding the decline in attendance rates, increased absenteeism, hindered student engagement, and obstacles to extracurricular involvement supports the notion that the conflict has adversely affected student participation. These findings highlight the need for interventions and support to mitigate the negative consequences of the conflict on student participation and ensure that students are able to fully engage and participate in their education despite the challenging circumstances.

Conclusion

The farmers-herders conflict in Benue State has been a longstanding and complex issue, characterized by tensions and clashes between agricultural farmers and nomadic herders. This conflict, rooted in competition over scarce resources such as land and water, has had far-reaching consequences for various aspects of society, including education. Recognizing the need to understand the impact of this conflict on education, a study was conducted to examine the effect of the farmers-herders conflict on school enrollment rates in Benue State. The study aimed to shed light on the changes in school enrollment rates in conflict-affected areas and identify the factors contributing to these fluctuations. By conducting surveys and analyzing data from schools in the region, the researchers sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the farmers-herders conflict and school enrollment.

The findings of the study revealed significant fluctuations in school enrollment rates over time due to the conflict. The onset of the conflict led to a decrease in enrollment rates in the affected areas, reflecting the disruptive nature of the conflict on education. The study also revealed that enrollment rates showed temporal variations during different phases of the conflict, indicating the influence of the conflict on educational opportunities. Moreover, the study highlighted that the conflict had both direct and indirect effects on school enrollment. The direct effects

included factors such as displacement, destruction of school infrastructure, and the fear of violence, which directly hindered students' ability to attend school. Indirect effects encompassed factors such as economic instability, which affected families' ability to afford education-related expenses, and the overall disruption of community life, which impacted the functioning of schools.

These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions and support to address the challenges faced by schools and students in conflict-affected areas. Efforts should focus on ensuring the safety and security of students, reconstructing damaged school infrastructure, and providing financial assistance to families affected by the conflict. It is crucial to prioritize education as a means to not only mitigate the immediate impact of the conflict but also foster long-term stability and development in the region. In conclusion, the study on the effect of the farmers-herders conflict on school enrollment in Benue State provides valuable insights into the disruptive nature of the conflict on education. The findings underscore the need for comprehensive interventions that address both the direct and indirect effects of the conflict on school enrollment. By prioritizing education and investing in the well-being of students and schools, steps can be taken to mitigate the negative consequences of the conflict and ensure access to quality education for children in conflict-affected areas.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the study recommends the following;

- i. Policymakers, educators, and stakeholders should prioritize targeted interventions to mitigate the disruptive effects of the farmers-herders conflict on school enrollment rates in Benue State. Temporary learning spaces or mobile schools should be established to ensure continued access to education for children in conflict-affected areas, especially during periods of heightened violence or displacement.
- ii. Policymakers and education authorities should prioritize comprehensive measures to address the adverse effects of the farmers-herders conflict on the quality of education in conflict-affected areas of Benue State. Initiatives to attract and recruit qualified teachers to conflict-affected areas should be implemented. Also, targeted training programs to enhance the skills and competencies of teachers should be provided, ensuring they are equipped to deliver quality education in challenging environments.
- iii. Policymakers, educators, and stakeholders should prioritize targeted interventions and support mechanisms to address the negative effect of the farmers-herders conflict on student participation in schools in Benue State. Measures to enhance the safety and security of students in conflict-affected areas should be implemented. This can include increased security presence, the establishment of safe routes to schools, and the implementation of safety protocols within schools to alleviate safety concerns and encourage student attendance.

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