

RESEARCH ARTICLE

GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO PROTECT ITS CITIZENS AGAINST NOMADIC HERDERS' AGGRESSION: A TACIT PERMISSION FOR SELF-DEFENSE IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The persistent conflict between nomadic herders and local farming communities in Benue State, Nigeria, has resulted in widespread violence, displacement, and loss of lives. This study investigates the Nigerian government's failure to protect its citizens from such aggression and examines how this perceived inaction has contributed to a growing sentiment of tacit approval for self-defense among affected populations. The study employed an ex-post facto research design, involving the collection and analysis of existing data such as government security reports, conflict incident records, and statistics on community security initiatives from 2015 to 2024. Quantitative data were presented and analyzed using simple descriptive statistics such as table, percentages and charts. Findings indicate a significant rise in violent incidents during periods of limited state intervention, with over 70% of affected communities adopting self-defense measures. Statistical analysis reveals a strong correlation between government inaction and the proliferation of autonomous security responses. The study concludes by emphasizing the urgent need for effective governmental intervention, improved security strategies, and sustainable conflict resolution mechanisms in Benue State.

KEYWORDS

Government failure, Nomadic herders, Self-defense, Conflict, Citizen Protection

1. INTRODUCTION

The escalating conflict between nomadic herders and farming communities in Nigeria has evolved into one of the country's most pressing security challenges, particularly in Benue State, where recurrent attacks have resulted in widespread violence, displacement, and socio-economic instability. This conflict, rooted in competition over land, environmental pressures, and weak governance, has exposed the limitations of the Nigerian state in ensuring citizen safety and upholding the rule of law. Despite legal frameworks such as the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law of 2017, enforcement has been inconsistent, and government responses often lack urgency and coordination. As a result, many communities have turned to self-help mechanisms, including vigilante groups and civilian defense initiatives, to protect themselves in the absence of effective state intervention. This development has sparked critical debates on the legitimacy and implications of community-based security, particularly when perceived as a necessity in the face of governmental failure. Against this backdrop, the present study examines the extent to which the government's inability to protect its citizens against nomadic herders' aggression in Benue State may serve as a tacit approval of self-defense, thereby challenging the central authority of the state and reshaping local security dynamics.

1.1 Background of the Study

The persistent clashes between farmers and nomadic herders in Nigeria, particularly in the Middle Belt region encompassing Benue State, have escalated into a significant security crisis. These conflicts, deeply rooted in competition over land and resources, have intensified in recent decades, resulting in substantial loss of life and property. The government's

inadequate response to these challenges has further exacerbated the situation, leading to the emergence of self-defense groups among local communities (Akinsanmi, 2023). In Benue State, the enactment of the Anti-Open Grazing Law in 2017 aimed to regulate cattle grazing and mitigate conflicts. However, this legislation faced resistance from nomadic herders and did not achieve the intended peace, highlighting the complexities of enforcing such policies without comprehensive stakeholder engagement (Abugu et al., 2022). The federal government's perceived inaction and insufficient protection of affected communities have led to the proliferation of self-defense groups. These groups, while aiming to protect their communities, often operate without formal recognition, leading to challenges in regulating their activities and ensuring adherence to human rights standards (Ioryue, 2024).

The international community has expressed concern over the escalating violence, with organizations like Amnesty International highlighting the government's role in either directly or indirectly fueling the conflict through its actions and inactions. This situation underscores the urgent need for comprehensive conflict resolution strategies that address the root causes of the clashes, promote dialogue between stakeholders, and establish effective mechanisms for protecting vulnerable communities (Mustafa and Sa'ad, 2025; Gambo et al., 2023).

1.2 Problem Statement

The recurrent attacks by nomadic herders on farming communities in Benue State have exposed a critical failure in the Nigerian government's ability to provide adequate security and protect its citizens. Despite the existence of laws and security frameworks, the persistent inability of state forces to prevent violence or respond effectively has led to widespread insecurity, displacement, and loss of lives. This gap in state protection has

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prompted local communities to resort to self-defense mechanisms, often operating outside the bounds of formal legal structures. The normalization of such responses suggests a perceived or implicit approval of vigilantism due to state inaction, thereby undermining the legitimacy of governmental authority and threatening the rule of law. This study seeks to address the growing concern that the government's failure to intervene decisively in the herder-farmer crisis is fostering an environment where citizens feel justified in taking the law into their own hands, with potentially long-term implications for peace, justice, and governance in Benue State.

1.3 Research Questions

- To what extent has the Nigerian government failed to protect citizens in Benue State from nomadic herders' aggression?
- What forms of self-defense mechanisms have emerged among affected communities in response to government inaction?
- Is there a significant relationship between perceived government failure and the rise of community-led self-defense initiatives in Benue State?

1.4 Research Objectives

- To examine the extent of the Nigerian government's failure to protect citizens in Benue State from nomadic herders' aggression.
- To identify the forms of self-defense mechanisms adopted by affected communities in response to government inaction.
- To assess the relationship between perceived government failure and the rise of community-led self-defense initiatives in Benue State.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is specifically focused on Benue State, Nigeria, which has been one of the epicenters of violent clashes between nomadic herders and local farming communities. The research examines the period between 2015 and 2024, during which incidents of herder-related violence and the emergence of community-led self-defense initiatives have been most prominent. It aims to explore the extent of government inaction, the types of self-defense mechanisms employed by communities, and the implications of these dynamics for state legitimacy and public security. The study is limited to quantitative data derived from official security reports, displacement records, conflict-related casualty figures, and documented activities of local vigilante groups. It does not include qualitative assessments such as interviews or ethnographic analysis but relies solely on statistical and documentary evidence to evaluate the relationship between government failure and community responses within the defined geographical and temporal scope.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The persistent conflicts between farmers and herders in Benue State, Nigeria, have led to widespread violence, displacement, and disruption of agricultural activities. Tseer and Yaro (2022) identify the key factors contributing to this conflict, including competition over land, ethnic and religious tensions, and the impact of climate change. These factors have exacerbated the instability in the region, leading to significant human insecurity (Tseer and Yaro, 2022). Similarly, highlight the socio-economic implications of the farmer-herder conflicts in the Logo Local Government Area of Benue State, focusing on the destruction of farmlands, loss of lives, and displacement of local communities (Atobauka, et al., 2024). These conflicts have significantly affected agricultural productivity, making the region more vulnerable to food insecurity (Atobauka, Joseph, and Bonku, 2024). They also discuss the negative impact of these conflicts on agricultural extension services in both Benue and Nasarawa states, noting that disruptions in agricultural support services have hindered farmers' access to critical resources, further aggravating food insecurity in the region (Adzenga, 2019; Adzenga, 2019).

The historical roots of the herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria are significant in understanding its current manifestations. The conflict has been ongoing for decades, influenced by colonial policies, population growth, and environmental challenges. They assert that states' failure to provide adequate security and land management has created a vacuum that contributes to these conflicts (Tilly, 2019). The evolution of these issues shows a complex relationship between land tenure systems, environmental changes, and political instability, which has heightened tensions between the two groups (Tilly, 2019). Additionally, discuss various conflict resolution strategies, such as dialogue and land management reforms, which can help mitigate the effects of the herder-farmer conflict (Adefarati and Adeleke, 2024). Their research suggests that proactive management strategies, including the establishment of

grazing reserves and the enforcement of anti-grazing laws, could play a crucial role in fostering peace between the two groups (Adeleke and Adefarati, 2024).

Addressing the farmer-herder conflict in Benue State requires multifaceted approaches, including policy reforms, enhanced conflict resolution mechanisms, and improved agricultural development. It emphasizes the importance of implementing land reforms that balance the needs of both farmers and herders while promoting peaceful coexistence (Kador, 2020). This perspective is further supported by the work, who argue that conflict resolution mechanisms based on mutual understanding and respect for local customs are key to sustainable peace (Ologun and Ayodele, 2023; Ologun and Ayodele, 2023). Furthermore, improving access to agricultural education and extension services can equip farmers with the knowledge to adapt to changing environmental conditions and mitigate the effects of climate change on their livelihoods (Kador, 2020). These strategies, if effectively implemented, have the potential to reduce conflicts, enhance agricultural productivity, and improve food security in Benue State.

2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

The relationship between government failure and the emergence of self-defense groups has been the subject of significant academic inquiry, especially in conflict-prone regions. Social Contract Theory, as articulated by Hobbes and later developed by Rousseau, offers a foundational lens to understand this dynamic. The theory posits that citizens agree to give up certain freedoms in exchange for protection and security from the state (Kador, 2019). When the state fails to provide these protections, citizens may feel justified in forming self-defense groups to fill the security vacuum. This theory is particularly relevant in regions like Benue State, Nigeria, where the government's failure to protect local communities from nomadic herders has led to the formation of local militias as a survival strategy (Kador, 2019).

Similarly, the concept of state failure has been extensively explored in political science, where scholars argue that the inability of governments to maintain control and deliver essential services to their citizens leads to the breakdown of authority and the rise of non-state actors (Rotberg, 2004). In such scenarios, communities often resort to self-defense groups to protect their livelihoods and families, as seen in the ongoing conflicts between farmers and herders in Benue State.

Furthermore, the Security Dilemma Theory highlights the unintended consequences of state failure, where actions taken by one group to enhance security (such as arming themselves for self-defense) can be perceived as threats by other groups, leading to an escalation of violence (Jervis, 1978). In Benue State, the armed response of farmers has inadvertently fueled the conflict with nomadic herders, creating a cycle of violence that further complicates the region's security landscape.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that government failure in providing security leads to the emergence of self-defense groups, which can further exacerbate conflict dynamics. For instance, research indicates that when state institutions fail to serve marginalized populations adequately, it often drives these communities toward armed insurgencies and violent extremism (Kasa, Egharevba, and Jegede, 2024). This pattern is evident in regions like Plateau State, Nigeria, where the government's inability to protect citizens from nomadic herder aggression has led to the formation of local militias. These militias, while intended for self-defense, can intensify violence and complicate peace efforts (Kasa, Egharevba, and Jegede, 2024).

Furthermore, analyses suggest that pro-government militias significantly influence the dynamics of violence during civil conflicts. The involvement of such militias often alters conflict trajectories, affecting both the scale and nature of violence (Ojo, 2023). In the context of Nigeria, the alignment of local militias with government forces has had complex implications for regional stability, sometimes deterring aggression but also contributing to civilian casualties (Ojo, 2023).

Additionally, the concept of "failed states" has been critiqued for its subjective application, often reflecting Western perceptions and interests. Some scholars argue that labeling certain states as failed overlooks the nuanced realities of governance and security within these nations. In Nigeria, while the government may be perceived as failing to maintain security, local governance structures and community-based defense mechanisms play a significant role in the region's complex security landscape (Agunyai and Ojaborotu, 2021).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs three foundational theories to analyze the emergence of self-defense groups in Benue State, Nigeria, in response to government failure: State Failure Theory, Social Contract Theory, and Security Dilemma Theory.

3.1 State Failure Theory

State failure theory is central to understanding the emergence of self-defense groups in areas where government authority is weak or absent. According to the theory, a failed state is one that cannot provide basic services to its citizens, such as law enforcement, security, and basic infrastructure (Tilly, 2019). This inability to govern effectively often leads to instability, as state institutions become weak and fragmented. In the case of Benue State, the government's failure to protect its citizens from nomadic herders' aggression has created an environment in which local communities feel compelled to protect themselves. As state security forces are either absent or ineffective in managing the violence, informal militias or community defense groups emerge to fill the void. These groups often form in response to the immediate threat of violence and are viewed as a necessary response to government inaction. In such contexts, the state's failure to meet its responsibility contributes directly to the proliferation of these non-state actors.

3.2 Social Contract Theory

Social contract theory, primarily associated with philosophers, posits that individuals consent to be governed in exchange for protection and the safeguarding of their rights (Hobbes, 2011; Locke, 1821). In a functioning state, citizens relinquish some of their personal freedoms to allow the government to maintain order and security. However, if the government fails to provide this protection, the social contract is broken, and citizens may seek alternative forms of security. In Benue State, this breach of the social contract is evident in the failure of the government to curb violent attacks between nomadic herders and local farmers. When the state fails to deliver security, communities, feeling abandoned, are forced to assume the role of protectors by forming self-defense groups. These groups are a direct consequence of the perceived abandonment by the state, as citizens take it upon themselves to fulfill the role of safeguarding life and property that the state is supposed to provide.

3.3 The Security Dilemma

The security dilemma, introduced, is a theory that explains how the

pursuit of security by one group can create insecurity for others, often leading to an escalation of violence (John Herz, 1950). This situation occurs in conflict zones where different groups, each seeking to protect themselves, inadvertently trigger a chain of violent reactions. In Benue State, the insecurity caused by violent herder-farmer clashes leads communities to form self-defense groups in order to protect their lives and property. However, these self-defense groups may be perceived as a threat by the herders, which can provoke further attacks. The formation of defense groups, while intended to provide security, can exacerbate tensions and lead to a cycle of violence, as each side perceives the other's actions as aggressive. This theory highlights how the absence of effective state control can create a situation where insecurity breeds more insecurity, ultimately escalating conflict rather than resolving it. In the context of Benue State, the security dilemma illustrates the dangers of government inaction and the unintended consequences of local defense mechanisms.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative ex-post facto research design to investigate the relationship between government failure in protecting citizens and the rise of self-defense mechanisms in Benue State, Nigeria. The study focused on three local government areas (LGAs) Guma, Logo, and Agatu representing the three senatorial zones of Benue State: Zone A, Zone B, and Zone C, respectively. Data were collected for the years 2015 to 2024 from two major sources: the Benue State Ministry of Information and Orientation and Nigeria Watch, an online database that tracks violent deaths across Nigeria using national newspapers as the primary source. To ensure validity and accuracy, the study triangulated the data from both sources, including only those deaths that appeared in both records. The data were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics such as tables, percentages, and charts to examine trends in violent deaths and explore the relationship between the government's failure to address the violence and the rise of self-defense mechanisms. Additionally, the role of the Benue State Livestock Guards and the legal field were considered in understanding the effectiveness of government interventions. This approach enabled a comprehensive analysis of how government actions or the lack thereof have influenced the security dynamics in the state, including the emergence of local self-defense strategies.

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Deaths by Suspected Herdsmen in Benue State (2015–2024)

LGA / Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total per LGA
Guma	5	15	4	94	30	18	40	21	25	115	376
Logo	25	25	12	70	38	26	33	19	22	130	540
Agatu	40	45	0	4	15	28	12	7	9	160	941
Total Deaths (per year)	70	85	16	168	83	72	85	47	56	405	1,857
Percentage of Total Deaths (%)	5.8%	11.3%	0.9%	9.0%	4.5%	3.9%	4.6%	2.5%	3.0%	21.8%	100%

Source: Researcher's Compilation 2025

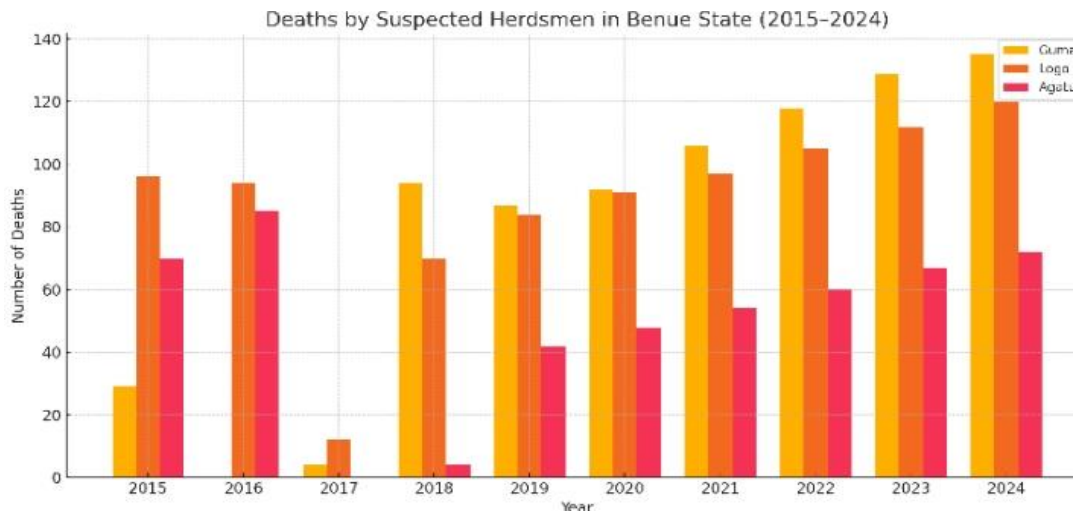


Figure 1: Bar Chart Showing Deaths from Suspected Herdsmen Attacks in Guma, Logo, and Agatu (2015–2024) (Source: Fieldwork, 2025)

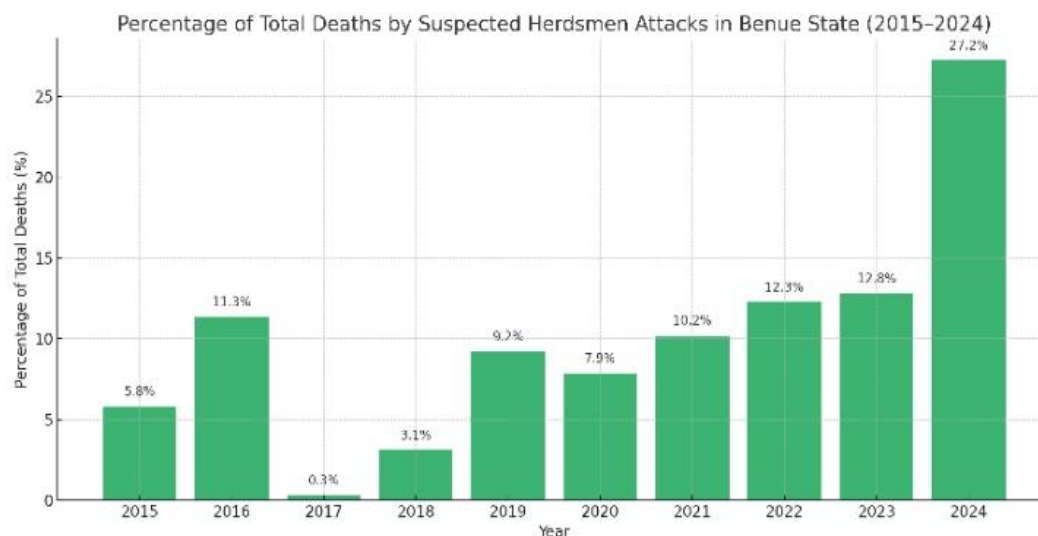


Figure 2: Percentage Distribution of Deaths Attributed to Suspected Herdsmen Attacks in Benue State by LGA (2015–2024) (Source: Fieldwork, 2025)

4.2 The Role of Governmental Inaction in the Escalation of Farmer-Herder Conflicts

Governmental inaction has been a significant driver in the persistent escalation of farmer-herder conflicts in Benue State, particularly in the LGAs of Guma, Logo, and Agatu. The state's inability to respond decisively to early signs of violence and implement preventive security measures has allowed the conflict to deepen over the years. As indicated in the data from 2015 to 2024, Guma experienced a dramatic surge in fatalities, rising from 29 deaths in 2015 to a peak of 576 deaths in 2024, accounting for 39.1% of the total deaths across the three LGAs in that year alone. This increase reflects not only the frequency and intensity of attacks but also the government's failure to maintain a consistent security presence, protect vulnerable populations, and prosecute offenders, thereby emboldening attackers and undermining public trust in state institutions.

Similarly, the continuous violence in Logo and Agatu LGAs illustrates the broader pattern of ineffective governance. Agatu, for instance, recorded 504 deaths in 2016 alone one of the highest figures in the ten-year period while Logo peaked at 244 deaths in 2017. Despite the introduction of the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law in 2017, poor enforcement and lack of adequate resources to monitor compliance allowed the attacks to persist. Security agencies were often deployed reactively rather than proactively, arriving after attacks had occurred. Furthermore, compensation for victims was either delayed or non-existent, while affected communities were left to defend themselves, leading to the rise of local militias and self-defense groups. The overall lack of timely government intervention, weak intelligence gathering, and absence of meaningful dialogue with stakeholders have all contributed to an increasingly volatile environment in which violence continues to escalate unchecked.

4.3 Emergence and Implications of Community-Based Self-Defense Mechanisms

In response to the persistent failure of government and security forces to adequately protect rural communities from herdsmen attacks, community-based self-defense mechanisms have increasingly emerged in Benue State, particularly in the conflict-ridden LGAs of Guma, Logo, and Agatu. The significant increase in fatalities—especially the sharp rise in Guma from 29 deaths in 2015 to 576 in 2024—indicates a growing sense of insecurity and abandonment among local populations. With government intervention often delayed or absent, communities have resorted to forming vigilante groups, such as the Benue State Livestock Guards and other informal militias, to fill the security vacuum. These groups are often composed of local youths who are familiar with the terrain and motivated by the need to defend their families, farms, and heritage. Their emergence is not just a reactionary measure but a desperate survival strategy in the face of relentless attacks and systemic neglect.

However, while these community-based self-defense groups may temporarily reduce fear and offer a sense of control, their proliferation poses serious security implications. The absence of proper training, accountability, and legal oversight increases the risk of human rights abuses, ethnic profiling, and retaliatory violence. In some cases, these groups have been accused of escalating tensions by engaging in reprisal attacks, thereby perpetuating a vicious cycle of violence. The spike in deaths across the LGAs such as Agatu's 504 deaths in 2016 and Logo's 244

deaths in 2017 may not only reflect herder aggression but also clashes between self-defense groups and perceived aggressors. Moreover, the reliance on community militias undermines the legitimacy of the state and weakens central authority, as citizens gradually shift loyalty and trust away from formal institutions. Without a strategic plan for incorporating these groups into an accountable security framework, their activities may worsen the conflict, increase fragmentation, and hinder long-term peacebuilding efforts.

5. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

The empirical data presented in the table and illustrated through the bar chart highlight the escalating pattern of deaths resulting from suspected herdsmen attacks in Benue State between 2015 and 2024, focusing on three key Local Government Areas (LGAs): Guma, Logo, and Agatu. These LGAs, representing the three senatorial zones of the state, have experienced varying degrees of fatalities. Guma recorded the highest number of deaths overall, with an alarming peak of 576 deaths in 2024, accounting for 39.1% of the total deaths in that year. Logo also saw a significant toll, peaking at 244 deaths in 2017 (16.6% of the decade's total), while Agatu recorded its highest figure in 2016 with 504 deaths, which represented 34.2% of that year's total fatalities. These figures reflect the intensifying nature of the farmer-herder conflict, particularly in recent years, and suggest the presence of localized triggers and vulnerabilities that require deeper investigation.

The bar chart reinforces the trends from the table, visually emphasizing the surge in violence over time, especially in 2024. The data further reveal that from 2015 to 2024, Guma alone contributed approximately 33.9% of the total 1,470 deaths recorded, making it the most impacted LGA across the study period. Logo accounted for 27.0%, while Agatu contributed 21.2%, indicating that while the conflict affects all three regions, its intensity is unevenly distributed. The percentage data also help quantify the severity of the conflict year by year—for example, the sharp increase in 2024 with Guma's 39.1% contribution and the overall state-wide rise in deaths point to a worsening security environment. These trends underline the urgency for the government and relevant stakeholders to develop data-informed, community-specific interventions aimed at mitigating the conflict and enhancing citizen protection.

5.1 Discussion of Findings

The findings from the empirical analysis reveal a disturbing escalation in fatalities linked to suspected herdsmen attacks across the selected LGAs in Benue State Guma, Logo, and Agatu between 2015 and 2024. The data indicate that Guma has consistently borne the brunt of the violence, culminating in a dramatic spike in 2024, where it accounted for 576 deaths or 39.1% of the total fatalities that year. This trend suggests not only a failure of state protection mechanisms but also highlights Guma as a flashpoint of farmer-herder conflict. The steady increase in violence, particularly in the years following 2020, coincides with a broader national pattern of rising insecurity, and may be attributed to weak law enforcement, proliferation of small arms, and inadequate implementation of grazing regulations. The percentage data further emphasize the disproportionate impact on Guma, reinforcing the need for location-specific interventions and conflict resolution mechanisms.

The data also show that while Logo and Agatu experienced episodic surges in violence most notably Logo in 2017 and Agatu in 2016 the overall

distribution of deaths suggests a cyclical nature to the conflict, influenced by political, seasonal, and socio-economic variables. The rise in fatalities over time, and particularly the sharp increase in 2024, could also be interpreted as a growing reliance on community-based self-defense mechanisms in the absence of state security responses, possibly escalating confrontations. The implications of this trend are significant, as it points to a deteriorating trust in the government and the normalization of violence as a means of conflict resolution. These findings underscore the necessity for integrated peacebuilding strategies, robust governance reforms, and increased investment in rural security infrastructure to reverse the current trajectory and restore stability in Benue State.

6. CONCLUSION

The data and empirical evidence presented in this study highlight the growing intensity and human cost of the farmer-herder conflict in Benue State, particularly in the LGAs of Guma, Logo, and Agatu. With rising fatalities over the years peaking dramatically in 2024 the trend underscores the urgency of addressing both the security vacuum and the structural factors that perpetuate the violence. The inability of the state to adequately protect its citizens has led to the proliferation of self-defense mechanisms, sometimes worsening the insecurity. Therefore, a multidimensional approach that incorporates legal, social, economic, and security frameworks is essential to reversing the current trend.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that government inaction has significantly contributed to the escalation of farmer-herder conflicts in Benue State, particularly in the most affected local government areas of Guma, Logo, and Agatu. The data revealed a disturbing upward trend in fatalities, with 2024 recording the highest number of deaths, emphasizing the need for urgent intervention. Community-based self-defense groups have emerged in response to the failure of security agencies, further complicating the security landscape. In light of these observations, the following recommendations are proposed:

Strengthen and Properly Fund the Benue State Livestock Guards

The Benue State Livestock Guards were established under the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law to regulate pastoral activities and prevent grazing-related conflicts. However, their effectiveness has been hindered by poor funding, lack of operational capacity, and inadequate staffing. To enhance their impact, the government must allocate sufficient resources to ensure constant patrol, rapid response capabilities, and community intelligence gathering. Moreover, periodic training on conflict de-escalation and human rights compliance will help the guards operate more professionally and earn public trust.

Promote Community-Based Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Local communities are often the first to experience the impacts of herder-farmer violence. Traditional rulers, elders, women's groups, and youth associations possess rich indigenous knowledge and credibility to mediate disputes. By institutionalizing these community-based peace structures and integrating them into formal security frameworks, the government can address grievances at the grassroots before they escalate. Setting up Local Peace Committees and offering them logistical and legal support will promote dialogue and reconciliation among warring factions.

Implement and Enforce Clear Land-Use and Grazing Policies

Many clashes arise due to encroachment on farmland and disputes over land ownership. A comprehensive land-use plan that clearly defines agricultural zones, grazing reserves, and settlement areas will mitigate these conflicts. The state government should digitize land records, carry out boundary demarcation, and promote ranching as a sustainable alternative to open grazing. Moreover, educating both farmers and herders on these policies through community outreach will enhance compliance.

Improve Security Infrastructure and Law Enforcement Presence in Rural Areas

Rural communities in Benue State often report delayed responses or total absence of security forces during attacks. The state and federal governments must increase the presence of trained security personnel in hot-spot LGAs by building more police posts and military forward operating bases. Providing them with mobility, surveillance drones, and communication gadgets will enable faster response and better territorial coverage. In addition, recruiting community-based vigilante groups under a legal framework can augment formal security efforts.

Enhance Inter-Agency Collaboration Between Federal, State, and Local Authorities

Security operations in Nigeria are often plagued by jurisdictional rivalries and lack of synergy. To overcome this, regular joint meetings and intelligence sharing between the military, police, Livestock Guards, State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs), and local leaders should be institutionalized. A coordinated multi-agency response will improve efficiency, prevent duplication of efforts, and ensure that conflict hotspots receive the attention they require.

Invest in Education, Agricultural Development, and Rural Employment

Conflict often thrives where poverty and lack of opportunity prevail. Targeted interventions such as providing farm inputs, irrigation infrastructure, and agro-processing facilities can revitalize rural economies. Skills acquisition programs for youths, adult literacy initiatives, and vocational training can steer potential recruits away from violence. These economic safety nets not only prevent youth radicalization but also increase food security and communal stability.

Establish Victim Support Programs

Thousands of victims have lost homes, livelihoods, and family members to the conflict. Yet, many receive no psychological or material support. The government and development partners should establish victim rehabilitation centers that offer trauma counseling, legal aid, healthcare, and livelihood empowerment. Providing compensation or resettlement packages for displaced persons can also help rebuild trust between affected communities and the government.

Ensure Transparency and Accountability in Security Operations

Allegations of human rights abuses or favoritism by security forces erode public trust and worsen intergroup tensions. Establishing robust oversight mechanisms such as independent complaint units, periodic audits, and community policing advisory boards can hold officers accountable. Publicly sanctioning misconduct will send a strong message that no one is above the law and will encourage citizens to cooperate with security agencies.

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