



Perceived Factors Against The Resolution of Fulani Herdsmen And Famers Crisis In Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined perceived factors fighting against the resolution of Fulani herdsmen and famers crisis in Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. 225 adults responded to the questionnaire titled Factors Responsible for Fulani-herdsmen and Famers Crisis (RFFC). Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation statistic. Result showed that religious fanatics, government insincerity and incompetence of security agents are all responsible for the continued crises. Based on the findings, the study recommended among other things that government should strengthen the existing laws that promote freedom of worship.

Keywords:

INTRODUCTION

Fulani herdsmen are a group of people popularly known for rearing cattle. This line of occupation makes it essential for the people to carry their cows from one location to another in search for food and water due to the wide coverage of desert in these states. According to research findings by Alhasa (2013), a sandy desert occupies about 35 to 40 percent of the land mass of the states of Borno, Yobe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto and Kebbi, which are the states of origin for the Fulani tribe. Over the years, the desert has consumed different parts of the region due to deforestation. This has encouraged many Fulani herdsmen to move from their base in these states towards the North central region, especially Benue state. Benue state is regarded as the food basket of the nation. It is an agrarian state because of the fertile soil and this makes agriculture very important for their livelihood and survival, and has inevitably attracted Fulani herdsmen to the state. In search for grazing fields, the herdsmen sometimes invade other people's farms. So, the farmers lament the malicious ravaging of their lands as it destroys their source of livelihood. At the end, it becomes a battle for survival.

In recent times, the crisis between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in the North central region of Nigeria has taken different dimensions. This has become a major threat to the peace, stability and unity of Nigeria. The incessant killings and destruction of properties have attracted the attention of international communities and organizations and many have questioned the sincerity of the present government on the issue of security. Fulani herdsmen have literally destroyed many communities around Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba and Enugu states. Some of the attacks by Fulani herdsmen on innocent citizens have been identified by Nicholas and Ayuba (2016). For instance, some communities in Benue state have been burnt, farm produce destroyed and human beings killed. At a time, over fourteen communities around Jos in Plateau state were burnt down. One of such incidence was the attack on Kwata community in Jos South Local government area of Plateau State where more than 22 persons were killed on Sunday, the 13th day of December, 2015. The Fulani had written to warn the community of Kwata Trade Centre, and Kuru that the Christmas season would not be an enjoyable one for the people of the community but the residents took the warning as a joke. On that fateful night, the marauding Fulani lived up to their threat when they attacked about six houses in

Kwata leaving not less than twenty two dead bodies in their trail of violence and death. In a similar situation, almost a local government area in Benue state also suffered from the hands of these Fulani herdsmen. For instance, in Logo Local Government Area of Benue State, suspected Fulani herdsmen killed eight residents in Ngorukgan, Tse Chia, Deghkia and Nhumbe. It was reported that the herdsmen came in a gorilla fashion like military maneuver, attacked residents of the village at dawn, hacking down anybody on sight. The situation is also not different in Nasarawa State. Some sections of the state did not find it funny when these Fulani herdsmen struck the area. In the west, these militant groups (alias Fulani herdsmen) abducted one prominent man – Chief Olu Falae, one time Secretary to the Federal government during Babangida regime and presidential candidate of defunct Alliance for Democracy (AD). Factors such as religious extremism, insincerity of the government and incompetence of the Nigeria police are considered as the very reasons why the menace is on the increase by day.

Religion, which is a matter of belief and practice, is a universal social phenomenon which seriously concerns almost every living man. Generally, religion is understood by many as a belief in the Supernatural power or the Supreme Being and their relationship with the nature that surrounds them (Eluu, 2001). Regrettably, the practice of religion has been taken to the extreme by some of the practitioners. For instance, what we have today as Boko Haram started from a religious angle. According to Nicholas and Ayuba (2016), a preacher named Mohammed Marwa, born in 1927 started a religious movement that metamorphosed into Maitatsine and later Boko Haram. His sermons which were against Western education, culture and its popularity in Nigeria were extreme and often strange. He saw the reading of any book other than the Koran as sinful and a sign of paganism. Through extreme religious belief, crisis is inevitable.

Late response by the Federal Government to tackle major security issues has been a challenge in this country. Ajakorotu (2007) observed that what is happening with Fulani-herdsmen is exactly how Boko Haram crisis started before it grew into a huge monster. The Federal Government, both the executive and legislative arms of government, has an attitude of waiting till things go out of hand before they tackle potential national crisis. Some other time, those charged with the responsibility to ensure that there is peace and order see it as an opportunity to enrich themselves, family members, friends and their unborn children and thus frustrate every effort aimed at resolving the crisis. The Federal Government prefers late damage control system to damage prevention system (Shiklam, 2012). It is on record that the Inspector General of Police (IGP) who was asked by the President of Nigeria to relocate to Benue in order to restore peace and order only spent a day in Benue State against the President's directives.

The careless attitude of the Nigeria police to handle the crisis promptly is a major setback in this battle with herdsmen. News flying all over the media reports that the police had pre-information about the plan of the herdsmen to attack a community in Enugu State but they did nothing to stop it. Some high ranking officials in the police and army might want to take advantage of the crisis to make money as in the case of arms deal (Alhasa, 2013). The author encouraged the security force to be more patriotic in their service to the nation. It is in the light of the foregoing that the researcher considered it necessary to investigate the situation.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Nwankwo (2013) stated that a descriptive survey research design is a plan, structure and strategy that an investigator adopts in order to obtain solution to research problems using questionnaire in collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data. The design was considered suitable since the study obtained data through the use of questionnaire. The study was carried out in Benue state. The area is appropriate for the study because people in the area have suffered greatly in the hands of these Fulani-herdsmen. The population of the study covered all the community leaders and Chiefs in Katsina-ala L.G.A. of Benue state but only 225 formed the sample size. Forty five Chiefs were drawn from each of the five major communities that have been attacked by the herdsmen. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled: "Factors Responsible for Fulani-herdsmen and Famers Crisis Questionnaire" (FRFFCQ) which was developed by the researcher through relevant literature reviewed and personal observation. The instrument was a 4- point scale of "strongly agreed", "agreed" and "disagreed" and "strongly disagreed", with corresponding values of 4, 3, 2, and 1. The instrument had a reliability index of 0.79 which was high for a study of this nature. Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation statistic. The average mean of 2.50 was used for decision-making. Any item with a mean rating of 2.50 and

above was accepted as a factor responsible for the continued attack by the Fulani-herdsmen while those with the mean of less than 2.50 was rejected.

RESULTS

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent to which religious fanatics contribute to Fulani herdsmen and famers crisis in Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Decision
1	These attacks are carried out by those who believe that Islam is the only religion and those outside are infidels.	2.70	0.45	Accept
2	These attacks may be another way of continuing jihad war.	3.30	0.36	Accept
3	These attacks are aimed at converting everybody to Islam.	2.61	0.54	Accept
4	Joining Islam may pacify perpetrators of these attacks.	2.50	0.42	Accept
5	These killings may be justifiable.	2.10	0.26	Not accept
Grand mean and standard deviation		2.90	0.52	

The result in table 1 shows that majority of the respondents accepted items 1 to 4. However, they rejected item 5 as shown by their mean score which is below the acceptable mean of 2.50.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent to which government insincerity contribute to Fulani herdsmen and famers crisis in Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Government has not done much to stop the crises.	3.10	0.32	Accept
2	The crisis between Fulani-herdsmen and famers is heavily politicized.	2.82	0.41	Accept
3	This crisis can be handled if the government wants to.	2.77	0.47	Accept
4	The government has made lots of fake promises concerning this issue.	3.03	0.37	Accept
5	Monies released to fight the menace are not judiciously used by the government officials.	2.63	0.25	Accept
Grand mean and standard deviation		2.78	0.29	

The result in table 2 shows that all the respondents accepted the items from 1 to 5.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent to which incompetence of Nigeria police contributes to Fulani herdsmen and famers crisis in Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Police has all it takes to combat this crisis.	2.90	0.44	Accept
2	Nigeria police has enough intelligence report and can respond immediately to quench whatever crisis.	2.71	0.32	Accept
3	The police are more concerned with the protection of lives.	2.07	0.11	Not accept
4	The perpetrators of this crisis appear to be stronger than police and can defeat police if the army is not around.	2.80	0.27	Accept
5	No hope the police will be better in future.	2.51	0.39	Accept
Grand mean and standard deviation		2.88	0.33	

The result in table 3 shows that majority of the respondents accepted items 1, 2, 4 and 5. However, they rejected item 3 as shown by their mean score which is below the acceptable mean of 2.50.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result in Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents accepted items 1 to 4 with mean of 2.70, 3.30, 2.61, and 2.50 respectively and standard deviation of 0.45, 0.36, 0.54, and 0.42 respectively. It is only item 5 with mean and standard deviation of 2.10 and 0.52 that were rejected by the respondents. The criterion mean of 2.90 which is high enough is a clear indication that the people believe that religious fanatics are responsible for their predicament. This result is in tandem with the finding of Nicholas and Ayuba (2016) that investigated militancy and kidnaping in Nigeria and found out that religious extremism was a major factor in promoting violence globally. The result is also similar to the findings of Ofuonyebuzo and Ijeh (2013) who found that religious intolerance has played a major

role in the escalation of crises in Nigeria. From Table 2, it was discovered that respondents accepted all the five items with mean of 3.10, 2.82, 2.77, 3.03, 2.63 and standard deviation of 0.32, 0.41, 0.47, 0.37 and 0.23 respectively. With the mean and standard deviation scores that were above the criterion mean, it is clear that government has not done much to bring this issue to an end. The people strongly believe that the government is simply paying a lip service. This is worrisome especially now that the people have decided to defend themselves. This result is in line with the findings of Alhasa (2013) who investigated herdsmen and farmers conflicts in the North-Eastern Nigeria and found out that government had not helped matters in this case because of the way and manner the matter was being politicized. Recent comments made by two serving governors – Fayose of Ekiti and Ortom Samuel of Benue states that government is playing politics with the lives of people in the North central also support this findings.

Table 3 showed that respondents accepted the items except item 3. This is revealed in their mean scores of 2.90, 2.71, 2.80 and 2.51 respectively and standard deviation scores of 0.44, 0.32, 0.27 and 0.39. With this, it can be deduced that weakness of Nigeria police force contributed to the incessant attack on farmers. Respondents strongly believed that police cannot help in this matter simply because they are too weak. This finding is in agreement with the report of the International Crisis Management Group (2008) that insurgency in the Niger Delta is as a result of the weakness of Nigeria police.

CONCLUSION

This study examined factors responsible for Fulani-herdsmen and farmers crisis in Nigeria with the aim of proffering solution on how bring the menace to control. Three variables focused on were religious fanatics, insincerity of the government and weakness of Nigeria police. The result revealed that the three variables have contributed to the problem we have at hand.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, the study recommended that:

- Government should strengthen existing laws that regulate freedom of worship.
- Government should partner with the Association of Professional Counsellors in Nigeria to establish counselling units in each of the 774 Local Government Areas in Nigeria and recruit enough trained counsellors who will embark on counselling for peaceful co-existence.
- Government should live up to expectation of those who voted them into power.
- Stringent measures should be adopted by the Government against those who sabotage the peace of the nation.
- Government should ensure that police personnel are trained to conform to global best practices.
- Bad eggs in the police should be fished out and sacked so as to restore sanity in the force.

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