

UNDERSTANDING FACTORS THAT MODERATED AGRARIAN LIVELIHOOD PRACTICES AND FARMER-HERDER CONFLICTS IN TIVLAND OF BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

Emmanuel Terngu Vanger

Department of Business Administration, Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi-Nigeria
Email: ternuguvanger@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study examined the factors that moderated agrarian livelihood practices and farmer-herder conflicts in Tivland of Benue State, Nigeria. The study population comprises of 16,599 farmer households and 20 Fulani herder camp heads that were found in the study area at the time of data collection. Multistage sampling technique was used to draw respondents for the study. Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings indicate that changes in agrarian practices of farmers and herders in Tivland have been moderated by population surges, improved literacy levels, agricultural planned change interventions, changes in the mode of production and monetization of the economy, institutional transformations like the Land Use Act of 1978, the guarantee of freedom of movement in the Nigerian 1999 Constitution (as amended), the ECOWAS transhumance protocol of 1988, and alterations in the livestock ownership structure in the African pastoralists society which conspired to reduce the probability of peace between farmers and herders in Tivland of Benue State, Nigeria. Conclusively, the Nigerian state has a major peace-building challenge which may only be overcome by a systematic reconsideration of the meeting points between the culturally rooted practices, planned change interventions and the new political institutional norms that interfere with farmer-herder conviviality.

© 2021 The authors. Published by ZARSMI UAE. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons AttributionNonCommercial 4.0

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

*Agrarian livelihood practices,
farmer-herder conflicts,
Tivland, Benue state, Nigeria*

Article History:

Received: 17 Jan 2021

Accepted: 19 Apr 2021

Available Online: 05 Jun 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

Conflicts between farmers and herders over land contestations, jettisoning of negotiated entry terms, crop damage, desecration/contamination of watering points, compensation, extortion, cattle rustling etc in Tivland which were initially resolved through dialogue have overtime resulted to large scale violent follow-ups, loss of lives, livelihoods, property and indeed, unpleasant consequences. (Benue State Government as cited in Vanger, 2018). This new trend in the nature and character of the conflicts since the beginning of 1999 has been adjudged to be the most extensive and devastating of them all, been a build-up of many years (Benue State Emergency Management Agency, 2014). To be sure, Moritz (2006) confirmed that there is a changing context and dynamics in the herder-farmer relations across West Africa resulting in violent conflicts. Similarly, Moritz (2010) recalls with nostalgia how farmers and herders enjoyed some measure of protracted conviviality enmeshed in building relations, reciprocity, product exchange, and support. These cooperative relations were moderated largely by the traditional institutional norms and rules of interactions that defined the institutional basis of this cooperation (Vanger and Nwosu, 2020; Vanger, 2018).

Interestingly, Hagher (2013) describes agrarian violence featuring farmers and herders as circuitous quarrels that are swayed and intensified by ecological constrictions and cultural prejudices. This position by Hagher is aptly reiterated by herders and farmers narratives as articulated by Tukur (2013), Genyi (2014) and Ortserga (2014). Similarly, these circuitous quarrels are enmeshed in varying prolific and tenure arrangements, cyclical incongruity sandwiched between the farmer-herder agrarian livelihoods (Vanger, 2018) and incessant mutual distrust (Vanger and Nwosu, 2020). The conflicts have been linked essentially to territoriality, State complicity in responding to farmer-herder conflicts and their livelihood related issues as well as the interference of emerging political institutional arrangements that undermined the hitherto existing traditional institutional norms that regulated their intergroup relations, and progressively, transformed into violent conflicts (Vanger and Nwosu, 2020; Vanger, 2018). Similarly, space inefficiency resulting from population surges and ecological stressors in the West Africa subregion, finds expression in the inclination towards legitimate territoriality on the part of farmers and the ensuing *alibi* for the herdsman to surreptitiously engage farmers through violent skirmishes (Brottem, 2016).

Historically, conflicts between farmers and herders in Tivland of Benue State, Nigeria date back to the 1980s, worsening as the years advanced (Benue State Government as cited in Vanger, 2018). Previously, herder admittance into Tiv areas in Benue State (including Tiv settlements in present day Nassarawa and Taraba states) were itinerant, featuring southward migration during the desiccated time of the year and northward relocation as the rains began (Ortserga, 2014). However, this

herder migration pattern was with time discarded and replaced with permanent residency in Tivland (Ortserga, 2014). Incidentally, this new migration pattern considerably increased the incidents of farmer–herder conflicts when juxtaposed with the era when adhered to negotiated entry terms (Tsuwa, Kwaghchimin, and Iyo, 2015). Incidentally, at the peak of the rains, livestock grazing overlaps precariously with the planting season as the ensuing existential inclination of these parties put them on collision course over farm trespass and crop damage (Iro, 1994). Formerly, the admittance of the herdsman into Tiv territories needed conferment by Tiv native authorities in such communities who endorsed their admittance and determined where the herders and their families could populate in line with Tiv native habits. During those times, the herdsman (mostly the Fulani) implored the community leadership to assign to them willing youths to guide them through areas with sufficient foliage and watering points away from the farms so as to avoid farm trespass and the subsequent crop damage. The accidental destruction of crops by stray animals was adequately recompensed (Tsuwa, Kwaghchimin, and Iyo, 2015).

However, institutional transformations introduced by the Nigerian state and politics of the West African sub-region meddled in the institutional basis of the coexistence of the two groups. Of particular importance is the fact that land use decree enacted in 1978 by Nigerian state purportedly placed all land in the jurisdiction of the State governments. Consolidating this new decree is the unencumbered freedom of movement guaranteed by the Nigerian 1999 Constitution (as amended). These institutional stricture from the state tended to compromise the claim of the Tiv over their ancestral lands and also created a basis for questioning any resistance against free movement of herders around any part of Nigeria (Vanger and Nwosu, 2020; Vanger, 2018). Derived from this new institutional conundrum assembled by the Nigerian state, at the twilight of the 1980s through the wake of the 1990s, herders became hesitant to negotiate entry as was the case hitherto and even when they cared to do; entry terms were dishonoured with impunity (Tsuwa, Kwaghchimin, and Iyo, 2015). At the African sub-regional level, the Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS) 1988 Protocol on transhumance which was intended to temporarily aide pastoralist to mitigate worsening vulnerability to climate shocks by guaranteeing free passage into territories of member states upon fulfilling entry requirements across which has contributed to these changes.

Seemingly, these institutional factors inundated the initial cooperative relations between farmers and herdsman anchored on traditional institutional norms and farmers and herders became divided over the institutional basis of their coexistence (Vanger and Nwosu, 2020; Vanger, 2018). Beyond these new institutional political norms that interfered with the conviviality of farmers and herders intergroup relations in Tivland, other factors like population surges, climate shocks, agricultural planned change interventions, improved literacy levels and changes in livestock ownership structure in pastoral societies in the late 1970s bears interest and interrogation. The persisting agrarian violence associated with these groups has inflicted loss of lives, livelihoods, property and general insecurity with dire consequences for food security. Therefore this study examines the factors that moderated agrarian livelihood practices and farmer-herder conflicts in Tivland of Benue State, Nigeria.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The justification for this research design is that it permits sampling from a large population especially that elements of the population share similar characteristics, the design is cost and time effective and results generated can be generalized. The study population comprises of 16,599 farmer households in 8 out of the 14 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Benue-northwest and northeast Senatorial districts which constitute Tivland of Benue State which were affected by the farmer-herder conflicts and 20 Fulani herder camp heads that were found in the study area at the time of data collection. The multistage sampling technique was used to draw respondents for the study. In the first instance, stratified sampling was espoused to sample the 8 affected Local Government Areas (LGAs). Thereafter, 4 out of the 8 LGAs affected by the conflicts were randomly sampled by way of balloting. The balloting was done in two phases: the Benue north-west and Benue north-east senatorial districts. The 4 LGAs randomly selected are: Guma and Makurdi in Benue north-west and Logo and Katsina Ala in Benue north-east. Subsequently, a reconnaissance survey was conducted with the aid of community heads/leaders in the 4 randomly selected LGAs for the purpose of identifying farmer households affected by the conflicts in the area of study. Consequently, the Taro Yamane's (1964) formula was used for determining a 400 sample size for farmers. Lastly, simple random sampling technique was used to randomly select 400 farmer household heads while accidental sampling was adopted to select 20 herder camp heads for the study. Data collection was through the use of a researcher developed Farmer-Herder Practice Inventory (FHPI) and FGD guide. Data collected was triangulated and analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages).

3. RESULTS

The analysis of the data collected is presented on the factors that moderated agricultural production practices, land practices and herder livestock management practices in Tivland and subsequently strained farmer-herder cooperative relations. The results of the study are presented as follows:

3.1 Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

The socio-economic characteristics of the respondents as presented on Table 1 indicate that while majority (95.2%) of respondent were Tiv farmers only 4.7% were Fulani herdsman. This implies that although the study area is predominantly a farming area there is the presence of Fulani nomadic herders who migrate into the study area to graze their livestock (cattle). Respondents who fall between the ages of 20 to 40years were 4.2% while 8.2% of respondents fell within the ages of 41-60 years. Respondents between the ages of 61years and above constituted 87.4%. The implication of the age mix of respondents in the study area is that farmer household heads (*Orya*) are constituted by the eldest male in the households and hence the study area is administered by gerontocracy which is similar to herders who are only male and led by the eldest in each herding group. Thus, the respondents are capable of providing the needed information for the study. Similarly, a total of 26.1% of respondents acquired adult education while 42.9% of respondents completed primary school, 17.2% completed school certificate (secondary school). Respondents who acquired tertiary institutions were 6.1% while 7.3% had non-formal education.

The result indicates that the respondents are capable of providing the needed information on the factors that moderated farmer-herder practices in Tivland.

Most respondents (37.9%) had 10-30 years of farming/herding experience. Others (35.4%) had 31-50 years while the rest (26.7%) respondents had 51 years experience and above. This indicates that most of the respondents have had long standing experience in farming/herding and were in a better position to observe changes in the farmer-herder practices in Tivland. This may be attributed to the fact that farming and herding are a way of life and every child born into any Fulani pastoralist or Tiv farming families is bound to practice his family's occupation from childhood hence the years of experience becomes much at adulthood. Also majority (80.9%) were Christians while 5.5% belonged to Islam, 13.5% belonged to the traditional religion. The result implies that the people in the study area are predominantly Christians which explains why conflicts between farmers and herders are viewed as having religious coloration.

Table 1
The distribution of respondents and their socio-economic characteristics

Socio-economic characteristics	Percentages (%)
Occupation	
Famer	95.2
Herder	4.7
Age (years)	
20-40	4.2
41-60	8.2
61above	87.6
Farming/herding experience	
10-30	37.9
31-50	35.4
51 above	26.7
Religion	
Christianity	80.9
Islam	5.5
Traditional	13.5

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

3.2 Factors that moderated Agricultural production practices in Tivland

The result shows that the agricultural production practices in Tivland have been moderated by population growth (100%). This may be attributed to the fact that, with the upsurge in human population in the area, there has been a decline in land per capita thereby affecting farm sizes and the need for optimal land use and management to overcome the shrinking land at farmer's disposal necessitated changes from shifting cultivation to crop rotation, mono cropping to mixed cropping and intercropping as well as seasonal farming to all year farming. Implicitly, lands hitherto accessible to herders for grazing when farmers practiced shifting cultivation with its fallowing feature; mono cropping and seasonal farming were now out of reach for the herders. This is especially that shifting cultivation witnessed swift reduction in fallow duration and eventually the abandonment of fallowing. Thus this new agricultural production practices were strange to the herders hence interpreted as deliberately aimed at suffocating pastoralists livelihood in which case, existentialist tendencies ignited tensions over denial of access to land and its use with corresponding incidents of forced entry/trespass, the ensuing crop damage and refusal to compensate for crop damage led to tensions and subsequently, violent conflicts between farmers and herders in Tivland.

The result also shows that improved literacy levels (94.5%) moderated the agricultural production practices. This may be attributed to the capacity to adopt modern technologies and techniques like sprayers, tractors, harvesters and processing machines to boost production. The implication of this is that with improved literacy levels which exposed farmers to adopt mechanization, it was easier to abandon subsistence farming for mechanized farming thereby further stiffening access to and use of lands by herders and the subsequent ensuing altercations. Thus, as production is made easier, the likelihood that pastoralists livelihood is suffocated in worsened and the herders on their part resisted the purported suffocation with violence. Similarly, agricultural production practices were moderated by planned change interventions (99.8%). This change was due to the introduction of government programmes (interventions) geared towards boosting agricultural production like Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, Accelerated Food Production etc that gave priority to certain areas of agriculture.

It was these agricultural planned change interventions that introduced farmers to optimal land management techniques like mixed cropping, intercropping, crop rotation, dry season farming and mechanized farming amidst shrinking land per capita. Implicitly, these interventions have contributed largely to the inclination towards territoriality by farmers enmeshed in sedentarist metaphysics that prioritises proclivity towards linking people and their peculiarities to definite activity space and ethnic homeland as opposed to herders' nomadic metaphysics that has preference for cattle trails as against 'roots of place'. Thus, contestation over access to and use of land leads to violence between farmers and herders in Tivland.

Change in the mode of production and monetization of the economy moderated agricultural production practices 100% and 94.5% respectively. These changes may be attributed to the introduction of mechanised agriculture which has made

commercialization of agriculture possible due to the availability, affordability and accessibility of modern techniques in agricultural production like farm tools and inputs as well as the introduction of the money taxation and bride price which integrated the Tiv economy into the capitalist mode of production. This change may also be attributed to the change in mode of production from subsistence to commercialization and commoditization of factors of production. The implication of these changes is that the individualism promoted by western capitalism had become deep seated in Tivland such that lands were considered private property by the farmers rather than a natural resource common accessible to all and sundry. In this, it became more difficult for herders to access lands hitherto accessible to them for grazing as at all times lands were under cultivation of crops which was the main stay of the Tiv economy. Consequently, existential tendencies that ensued resulted in violence with unpleasant consequences. Therefore, the perceived factors that moderated agricultural production practices in Tivland in this study were attributed to upsurge in population, improved literacy levels, planned change intervention, change in mode of production and monetization of the economy as seen on Table 2.

Table 2

Percentage distribution of respondents' perceived factors that moderated the agricultural production practices in Tivland

Moderating factors	Percentages (%)
Population growth	99.8
Improved literacy levels	94.5
Planned change interventions	99.8
Change in mode of production	100
Monetized economy	94.5

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

3.3 Factors that moderated the land practices in Tivland

Respondents' perception of factors responsible for alterations in land practices in Tivland on Table 3 indicates that the Land Use Act (99.5%) was responsible for the herders' contest of land rights experienced in Tivland. This may be attributed to the fact that prior to the promulgation of the Land Use Decree of 1978, herders respected the land rights in Tivland. This is because, the new land regime placed all lands in the Nigerian state under the custody of the state governments thereby meddling with the claim of legitimate territoriality of the farmers while legitimizing the queries over the capacity of sedentary farmers to resist the unencumbered inroads of herders into their supposed home domains since such lands have purportedly dissolved into a national resource common to be accessed by all. Implicitly, forced entry became the option when farmers were not disposed to accommodating herders in their communities. Similarly, population growth (100%) moderated the traditional land practices in Tivland. This implies that the upsurge in human population has affected landholding in terms of land per capita, thus creating stiff competition over land between individuals and groups. Thus, changes in land tenure practices in this study were attributed to the provisions of the Land Use Act of 1978 and population growth which induced a decline in land per capita.

Table 3

Percentage distribution of respondents' perceived factors that moderated the land practices in Tivland

Moderating factors	Percentages (%)
The land use Act	99.5
Population growth	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

3.4 Factors that moderated the herder livestock management practices in Tivland

The herder livestock management practices in Tivland have been moderated by the Land Use Decree (98.1%). This may be attributed to the promulgation of the Land Use Decree of 1978 which brought all hitherto existing native lands under the State and made the State Governors the owners of such land. This gave herders the impetus to alter the initial entry pattern which was negotiated entry to forced entry on the grounds that all lands were under the State's jurisdiction and so needed no consent of the natives to enter their communities. Finding also indicate that the guarantee of freedom of movement as well as the liberty of Nigerians to inhabit any part of the country practicing their livelihood by the 1999 Constitution is a factor that progressively moderated the herder livestock management practices in Tivland by 76.4%. Implicitly, with the return of democracy to Nigeria in 1999 which was premised on the 1999 Constitution which permitted all Nigerians free passage to and from all communities gave herders the impetus question the need to negotiate entry into Tiv farming communities as was the case prior to this time. Thus, the herders jettisoned the negotiated entry seasonal migration pattern and opted for force when entry was resisted, maintained all year round presence with implications for farm trespass and crop damage.

Interestingly, the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance 1988 which provided for the free movement of persons and livestock across the sub-region to promote the development of livestock in West Africa moderated herder livestock management practices by 94.5%. The implication is that herders perceived this institutional framework as superseding their

earlier entry arrangements into Tiv farming communities thus querying the place of the traditional institutional norms in their interactions. Population growth (100%) moderated the herder livestock management practices in Tivland. This may be attributed to decline in land per capita which was caused by population explosion and saw the abandonment of shifting cultivation and fallowing and expanded cultivation which made it difficult for herders to access lands hitherto accessible to them for grazing. Thus, the consequence of this new reality altered the herder entry pattern, breached the negotiated entry terms and made conflict resolution tasking.

Similarly, changes in the livestock ownership structure in the African pastoral society (100%) moderated the herder livestock management practices in Tivland. This implies that the introduction of herding contracts and the ensuing consolidation and the proletarianisation of pastoralists labour, the decorum in the farmer-herder intergroup relations was eroding as the hired had no incentive to be civil given the exploitative nature of the herding contracts. This is evident in the unnecessary farm trespass and crop damage and refusal to adequately recompense for crop damage and the altercations that follow. Therefore, changes in the herder livestock management practices in Tivland were attributed to the promulgation of the Land Use Act 1978, the 1999 Constitution, the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance 1988, population growth and changes in the livestock ownership structure in African pastoral societies.

Table 4

Percentage distribution of respondents' perceived factors that moderated the herder livestock management practices in Tivland

Moderating factors	Percentages (%)
The land use Act	98.1
The 1999 Constitution	76.4
The ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance 1988	94.5
Population growth	100
Change in livestock ownership structure	100

Source: *Fieldwork*, 2016

4. DISCUSSION

The socio-economic characteristics shows that Tivland is natively and predominantly inhabited by Tiv farming communities who have contact with migrant herders of Fulani extraction who enter farming communities to graze their livestock. The implication of this finding is that physical contact between these different land users may likely cause conflicts over differences in their production systems and ownership inclinations and other socio-cultural underpinnings. This finding agrees with Ortserga (2014) that, physical contact between farmers and herder is conflict prone as the differences located in their prolific engagements and tenure arrangements is bound to put farmers and herders on collision course especially over crop damage, water desecration, compensation dilemma and cattle rustling etc. The findings on the age composition of respondents implies that farmer households are male dominated as it is only male that are family heads meaning that though an offspring, the household headship traditionally belongs to the male no matter how young, once he is by virtue of birth the eldest male adult in the family and not his own mother and all family members recognise this and the decision of discussing with any person on issues bothering the family are the exclusive prerogative of the household head. The finding also indicates that the nomadic herding is an activity exclusively reserved for male youths who are led by the eldest among them who is saddled with the responsibility of decision making on the rangeland is the only person permitted by culture to oblige information or make decisions concerning herd welfare and security of the herding group. Therefore, any information obliged by the heads of farmer households or heading group is valid. The findings also demonstrate that with the educational exposure of respondents, indicates their ability to understand at least the needed and answer them appropriately on the focus of the study. The finding of the study finds relevance with Ekong (2010) who admits that, age and educational exposure equips people with the capacity to absorb and convey information.

The farming/herding experience indicates the level of familiarity with the practices by farmers and herders who can easily narrate their experiences with respect to the alterations in the practices as well as those factors responsible for such moderations. On the religious grounds, Tivland comprises of Christians who are in the majority, Traditionalist who are next in number to the Christians while Islam is the least practiced religion in the area. This finding can be credited to the fact that conflicts associated with farmers and herders in the area can be located in religious undertone as religion and ethnicity are factored in when examining conflicts concerning human diversities. This view agrees with Genyi (2017) that "ethno-religious considerations underpin inter-group relations hence they define a people's identity and nationality" as is the case between the farmers and the herders. The result shows that the agricultural production practices in Tivland have been moderated by population dynamics. This may be due to the emerging shrink in land per capita due to population surge which is likely to ignite contestation over access to and use of land resources especially in agrarian rural economies. This finding is corroborated by Ortserga (2014) who affirms that agricultural land use change is caused by population growth, and the major change is intensification of land use in order to manage the challenge of land paucity that sets different land users on collision course over contestations aimed at access to and use of lands. This finding is also in line with the findings of Genyi (2017) who confirms that due to the reduction in available land resources precipitated by high population rates which affects inter-group relations, farmers are under pressure and this has necessitated intensification of land use practices at the expense of extensive

practices like shifting cultivation. The finding is also congruent with Tybbee (2009) who posits that time-honoured farming practices in Tivland are undergoing reforms due to brisk population expansion and modernity.

The result also shows that improved literacy levels exposed farmers to modern technologies and techniques such as the use of sprayers, tractors, harvesters and processing machines to boost production. Thus, adoption of such modern agricultural production techniques gave impetus to the moderation of agricultural production practices. The implication of this is that with improved literacy levels which exposed farmers to adopt mechanization, it was easier to jettison subsistence farming and opting for mechanized farming thereby further stiffening access to and use of lands by herders and the ensuing altercations. Thus, as production becomes mechanized, it is likely to have a stranglehold on pastoralists' livelihood due to diminishing access to land which will be resisted with violence. This finding is consistent with the results established by the West African Network for Peace-building (2010) that the mass expansion in arable farming has continued to shrink access to not just lands but also watering points hitherto accessible to pastoralists triggering conflicts between farmers and herders in agrarian based economies. Similarly, Turner, Ayantunde, Patterson and Patterson III, (2011) corroborates that as farmers embark on commercial crop production spanning into areas that were hitherto accessible to herders for grazing, there is the likelihood that livestock will trespass on farms causing crop damage leading to conflicts.

Correspondingly, agricultural production practices were moderated by planned change interventions. To be sure, the introduction of agricultural planned change interventions like Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, Accelerated Food Production that gave priority attention certain areas of agriculture aimed at boosting agricultural production introduced farmers to optimal land management techniques, dry season farming and mechanized farming as a way of consolidating agriculture as the country's economic mainstay. Implicitly, these planned change interventions led to the expansion of arable farming which overtime outgrew its initial spatial demand thus venturing into areas hitherto accessible to herders. Derivingly, contestations over access to and use of land resources ignited inclinations towards territoriality enmeshed in sedentarist metaphysics that prioritises proclivity towards linking people and their peculiarities to definite activity space and ethnic home-land on the part of farmers as opposed to herders' nomadic metaphysics that has preference for cattle trails as against 'roots of place'. This finding is congruent with the works of Moritz (2010; 2012), Oladele and Oladele (2011) who variously established that farmer-herder conflicts are induced, precipitated and exacerbated by the quest for access to and use of lands in agrarian economies especially that their prolific systems depend exclusively on land and its resources.

Findings also established that changes in the mode of production and monetization of the economy moderated agricultural production practices respectively. Interestingly, the viability and feasibility of mechanised and commercialized farming leveraged on the availability, affordability and accessibility of modern techniques in agricultural production and monetization of the Tiv economy via contact with colonialism which ensued individualism and the commoditization of factors of production in Tivland. For instance, lands were considered as private property by the farmers as opposed to herders who perceived land a natural resource common accessible to all and sundry. In this, it became more difficult for herders to access lands hitherto accessible to them for grazing as at all times lands were under cultivation of crops which was the main stay of the Tiv economy. Consequently, existential tendencies that ensued resulted in violence with unpleasant consequences. This finding is compatible with that of Ahmadu (2011) Moritz (2012) and Mwamfupe (2015) who established that policies whether local or international aimed at addressing agrarian livelihood and its related concerns are purportedly, designed in favour of farmers. Congruently, Tonah (2006) confirms that policies aimed at mitigating land dilapidation and negating subsistent farming end up chocking nomadic herdsman's access to water and grazing lands.

The study also established that the Land Use Act of 1978 moderated land practices in Tivland. To be sure, previously, before this new land law regime came into effect, herders negotiated entry into Tiv communities and carefully observed entry terms and were favourably disposed to conflict resolving mechanisms in their host's communities. However, with the promulgation of the Land Use Decree, herders began to contest land rights, violated entry terms, embarked of forced entry purporting that all lands had dissolved into a natural resource common accessible to all for legitimate practice of their livelihoods. Thus, the law interfered with rights of sedentary farmers to enforce territoriality claims and it gave impetus to the herders to query the competence of sedentary farmers to resist the unencumbered inroads of herders into their supposed home domains and the altercations that follow. This finding is consistent with the claims of Vanger (2018) that institutional transformations led by the Nigerian state particularly her land use decree endorsed in 1978 apparently compromised the claim of the Tiv over their ancestral lands and also gave credence to herders to query the relevance of seeking permission to enter into and access lands owned by the state within Tivland for grazing.

Similarly, population growth moderated the traditional land practices in Tivland. Implicitly, due to growing population, many rural settlements are increasingly becoming urbanized thereby encroaching on available agricultural land. Thus, population explosion is engendering a very strong individual attachment to land, making land redistribution a tough concern as individuals are no longer willing to part with any piece of their land. Therefore, population surges have shrunk landholding per capita in Tivland which is inducing stiff competition over land between individuals and groups. This finding is corroborated by Ujoh (2014) who established that increasing population growth has continued to create stiff competition over land between agrarian livelihoods. This finding is also congruent with the work of Vanger (2018) who confirms that the individualisation of land in Tivland negated communal ownership upon which community leaders leveraged to grant admission to herders to graze in their communities consequent upon which herders opted for forced entry and grazing with unpleasant consequences.

Findings indicate that the herder livestock management practices in Tivland have been moderated by the Land Use Decree which in the interpretation of herders brought all hitherto existing native lands under the State and made the State Governors the owners of such land which inexorably gave impetus to herders questioning of the need to seek admittance into Tiv communities through the traditional institutional framework. Findings also indicate that guaranteed freedom of movement and liberty of Nigerians to gain passage in any part of the country practicing their livelihood without encumbrances by the 1999

Constitution is a factor that progressively moderated the herder livestock management practices in Tivland. Another institutional factor that interfered with the herder livestock management practices is the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance 1988 which became an alibi for herders to query the place of the traditional institutional norms in farmer-herder intergroup interactions. This finding is consistent with the work of Vanger and Nwosu (2021) who argue that tensions and conflicts between Tiv-farmers and the Fulani-herdsmen is occasioned largely by the disarticulation of the traditional institutional norms/rules of interaction by formal political institutions expressed in land use laws, human rights provision of the Nigerian constitution and the West African sub-regional protocol on transhumance.

Similarly, population growth moderated the herder livestock management practices in Tivland. On the part of farmers, as land use intensification was employed to mitigate the shrinking land per capita challenge induced by population changes, traditional farming practices like shifting cultivation with its fallowing feature which accommodated transhumance practice were progressively eroded just as farmers expanded cultivation to areas that were hitherto accessible to herders for grazing. On the part of the herders, the rapid surges in livestock population and corresponding presence in Tivland made the monitoring of grazing cumbersome while farm trespass and crop damage became inevitable. Thus, when the existential tendencies of farmers evidenced in the jettisoning of traditional farming practices like shifting cultivation and the opting for land use intensification practices like mixed cropping, intercropping, crop rotation as well as the expansion of cultivation into areas hitherto accessed by herders for grazing is juxtaposed with herders survivalism in the face of limited access to land, forced entry that resulted in farm trespass and crop damage became a common feature. This finding is congruent with that of Dary, James and Mohammed (2017) who avail that rapid population expansion and corresponding increase in farming activities induce, precipitates and exacerbates resource paucity and agrarian violence.

Changes in the livestock ownership structure in the African pastoral society are also established to have moderated the herder livestock management practices in Tivland. This implies that the introduction of herding contracts and the ensuing consolidation and the proletarianisation of pastoralists labour, the decorum in the farmer-herder intergroup relations was eroding as the hired herders had no incentive to be civil given the exploitative nature of the herding contracts. This is evident in the unnecessary farm trespass and crop damage and refusal to adequately recompense for crop damage and the altercations that follow. This finding is corroborated by Bassett 1994; Bonfiglioli 1985; Toulmin 1992 who establish that the alterations in the livestock ownership structure featuring herding contracts can seldom be excused from impacting rangeland management negatively especially that the contracts reverberate the proletarianisation of pastoralist labour and inequality.

5. CONCLUSION

The paper sets out to establish factors that moderated agrarian livelihood practices and farmer-herder conflicts in Tivland of Benue State, Nigeria. The said changes have been moderated by population surges, improved literacy levels, agricultural planned change interventions, changes in the mode of production and monetization of the economy, institutional transformations like the Land Use Act of 1978, the guarantee of freedom of movement in the Nigerian 1999 Constitution (as amended), the ECOWAS transhumance protocol of 1988, and alterations in the livestock ownership structure in the African pastoralists society, thus conspiring to reduce the probability of peace between farmers and herders in Tivland of Benue State, Nigeria. Of particular importance is the fact that as human population increased over the years in Tivland, it had a corresponding effect on the availability of land especially with rapid urbanization and expanded cultivation of land for food production purposes. Interestingly, as literacy levels improved, new techniques of land management and a production practices evolved and were adopted to mitigate land paucity occasioned by rapid population surges and the need for the intensification of agricultural land use.

Coincidentally, the post colonial agricultural planned change interventions geared towards boosting agricultural production like Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, Accelerated Food Production etc that gave priority to certain areas of agriculture and this gave credence to improved and expanded agricultural production practices that inadvertently induced conflicts between farming and herding livelihoods. Worthy of note is the fact that colonial contact which induced changes in the mode of production with emphasis on commercial farming and cash crop production and the monetization of the economy mediated by population growth conspired to create competition over scarce landed resources with a proclivity towards individualism and territorialism which further divided farmers and herders over the basis on their co-existence. Intriguingly, agrarian livelihood practices were moderated by the disarticulation of the traditional institutional norms and rules of interactions by formal political institutions expressed in Land Use laws, West African sub-regional protocol and other policy lines evident in the attitudes of farmers and herders in their new pattern of intergroup relations. To be sure, while farmers are inclined to the traditional norms of land ownership which gives them rights over lands within their home domain, herders prioritised the new political institutional norms that gave impetus to them to question the rationale for seeking admittance into Tiv territory when after all in their interpretation, all lands belong to the State.

Similarly, subregional political arrangements like the free movement of persons and goods and the transhumance protocols reinforce the legal rights of herders to enter into any community without any encumbrances from the native land owners. As to whether they fulfil the obligations of the protocols is the exclusive jurisdiction of the State which in my opinion is a talk for another day. The alterations in the livestock ownership structure where herding contracts have assumed prominence is another factor that bears interest and interrogation as farmers recall how prior to this transformation migrant herders came with their families, resided in areas designated for herders and were disposed to observing entry terms and resolving conflicts through the community justice system. Thus, the hitherto decorum in the farmer-herder intergroup relations has eroded as the hired herders have no incentive to be civil as seen in the unnecessary farm trespass and crop damage and refusal to adequately recompense for crop damage and the altercations that follow given the exploitative nature of the herding contracts. What can be added is that, the Nigerian state has a major peace-building challenge which may only be overcome by a systematic

reconsideration of the meeting points between the culturally rooted practices, planned change interventions and the new political institutional norms that interfere with farmer-herder conviviality.

6. REFERENCES

- Ahmadu, H. J. (2011). *Farmer-herder conflict: Exploring the causes and management approaches in the Lake Chad Region, Nigeria*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Universiti Utara,
- Bassett, T. J. (1994). Hired herders and herd management in Fulani pastoralism (Northern Côte d'Ivoire). *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 133-5, (1-3), 147-73.
- Benue State Emergency Management Agency (2014). Report on Internally Displaced Persons from the Crisis between Cattle Herdsmen and Farmers in Benue State. *Report and Statistics of IDPs from the Crisis*, 1.
- Bonfiglioli, A. M. (1985). Evolution de la propriété animale chez les WoDaaBe du Niger. *Journal des Africanistes*, 55, (1-2), 29-38.
- Brottem, L. (2016). Environmental Change and farmer-herder conflict in agro-pastoral West Africa. *Human Ecology*, 1-17. doi: 10.1007/s10745-016-9846-5
- Dary, S., James, S. H. & Mohammed, A. S. (2017). Triggers of farmer-herder conflicts in Ghana: A non-parametric analysis of stakeholders' perspectives. *Sustainable Agriculture Research*, 6(2), 141-151.
- ECOWAS (1998). Twenty-first conference of Heads of States: Decision A/DEC.5/10/98 Relating to the regulations on transhumance between ECOWAS Member States. *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, 35 1-14.
- Ekong E. E. (2010). *Rural Sociology* (3rd Ed.). Dove Educational Publishers Uyo, Nigeria.
- Genyi, G. A. (2017). Ethnic and religious identities shaping contestation for land based resources: The Tiv farmers and pastoralist conflicts in Central Nigeria until 2014. *Journal of Living Together*, 4-5(1), 136-51. www.icmediation.org.
- Hagher, I. (2013). The Fulani-Tiv at war in Nigeria, as President Jonathan helplessly looks on (1). *PremiumTimes*. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/114532-the-fulani-tiv-at-war-in-nigeria-as-president-jonathan-helplessly-looks-on-1-by-iyorwuese-hagher.html>
- Iro, I. (1994). *The Fulani Herding System*. Washington, African Development Foundation. 6-12.
- Land Use Act (1978) Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette. No.14. *Federal Ministry of Information, Printing Division*, 65(2-6), Lagos, Nigeria
- Moritz, M. (2006). The politics of permanent conflict: Farmer-herder conflicts in northern Cameroon. *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, 40(1), 101-126.
- Moritz, M. (2010). Understanding Herder-Farmer Conflicts in West Africa: Outline of a Processual Approach. *Human Organization*, 69(2), 138-148. doi: 0018-7259/10/020138-11.
- Moritz, M. (2012). Farmer-herder conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa. Retrieved from <http://www.eoearth.org/view/article/51cbdc67896bb431f693d72>
- Mwamfupe, D. (2015). Persistence of farmer herder conflicts in Tanzania. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 5(2), 1-8.
- Oladele, T. O. & Oladele, O. I. (2011). Effect of pastoralist-farmers conflict on access to resources in savanna area of Oyo State, Nigeria. *Life Sciences Journal*, 8(2), 616-621.
- Ortserga, D. S. (2014). Resource-based conflicts in the Middle Belt Zone of Nigeria and the question of legitimate territoriality (paper presented at the International Conference of Social Sciences, Benue State University, Makurdi, March 26-28, 2014).
- Tonah, S. (2006). Managing Farmer-Herder Conflicts in Ghana's Volta Basin. Ibadan a *Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(1), 33-45
- Toulmin, C. (1992). Herding contracts: for better or worse? *ILEIA Newsletter*, 3(29), 8-9.
- Turner, M. D., Ayantunde, A. A., Patterson, K. P., & Patterson III, E.D. (2011). Livelihood transitions and the changing nature of farmer-herder conflict in Sahelian West Africa. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 47(2), 183-206. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220381003599352>
- Tsuwa, T.J.; Kwaghchimin, V.; & Iyo, K. (2015). The Farmers/Herders Conflicts in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria: A focus on the Tiv/Fulani Conflict. *Journal of Political Inquiry*, 1(1), 123-133.
- Tukur, M. B. (2013). *Conflicts between transhumant pastoralist and farmers in Nigeria: The way out*. Wordpress.com. Retrieved from <https://pastoralist2.wordpress.com>.
- Tyubee, B.T. (2006). Influence of extreme climate on common disputes and violence in Tiv Area of Benue state. In T.T. Gyuse & O. Ajene (eds.) *Conflicts in the Benue valley*, Makurdi, Benue state University Press.
- Ujoh, F. (2014). Population growth and land resource conflicts in Tivland, Nigeria. *Resources and Environment*, 4(1), 67-78. doi: 10.5923/j.re.20140401.08.
- Vanger, E. T. (2018). *Conflicts, peace-building and sustainability of farmer-herder practices in Tivland of Benue State-Nigeria*. (Doctoral Dissertation). University of Nigeria, Nsukka. <http://oer.unn.edu.ng>
- Vanger, E. T. & Nwosu, B. U. (2020). Institutional parameters that condition farmer-herder conflicts in Tivland of Benue State, Nigeria. *African Security Review*, 29(1), 20-40.
- West African Network for Peace-building (2010). *Concept paper on agriculture and pastoralist conflicts in West Africa Sahel*. Retrieved from http://www.wanep.org/wanep/attachments/article/158/cp_agric_pastoralist_aug2010.pdf