

Herdsman-Crop Farmers Conflict and Household Economy in Rural Nigeria: Evidence from Farming Households in Guma LGA of Benue State

¹Justin Otanwa Otanwa & ²Dennis Terparse Nomor

^{1,2}Department of Economics, Rev Fr Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, Benue State Nigeria

Abstract

Violent conflicts between pastoral herders and sedentary farmers have become one of the most pressing rural development challenges in Nigeria. These conflicts increasingly manifest as organized attacks on farming communities, leading to displacement, destruction of livelihoods, and growing food insecurity. This study examines the effects of herdsmen attacks on the household economy of farming households in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State. Specifically, the study analyzes how violent attacks influence agricultural output, household income, and the coping strategies adopted by affected households. Using a survey research design, data were collected from farming households residing in Internally Displaced persons (IDP) camps and conflict-affected communities within Guma LGA. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were employed to examine the relationship between exposure to attacks and household economic outcomes. The findings reveal that herdsmen attacks significantly reduce agricultural output, disrupt household income sources, and alter consumption patterns, forcing households to adopt negative coping mechanisms such as distress asset sales and reduced food intake. The study concludes that persistent insecurity has severely undermined the economic sustainability of rural households in the study area. The study recommends strengthened security interventions, targeted livelihood restoration programs, and the promotion of conflict-sensitive agricultural policies to support household economic recovery in conflict-affected communities.

Keywords: Agricultural output, herdsmen conflict, household economy, rural livelihoods.

Jel: Q12, Q13 D10, O12, D74

1. Introduction

Rural household economies form the backbone of livelihood sustainability in agrarian societies. In many developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, rural households depend largely on agriculture for food production, employment, and income generation (World Bank, 2022). Agricultural activities not only provide sustenance for rural populations but also contribute significantly to national economic development through food supply, employment creation, and poverty reduction. However, the stability of rural livelihoods is increasingly threatened by a variety of structural shocks, including climate variability, environmental degradation, economic instability, and violent conflicts (Audu, 2023).

Among these challenges, resource-based conflicts between pastoral herders and crop farmers have emerged as a major source of rural instability in Nigeria. Traditionally, pastoralists migrated seasonally in search of pasture and water for livestock, while farmers cultivate crops within fixed agricultural settlements (Omole, 2018). For decades, both groups coexisted through traditional mechanisms that regulated access to land and water resources. However, rapid population growth, expansion of farmland, climate-induced migration of

pastoralists, and weak institutional frameworks for land governance have intensified competition over scarce natural resources (Ide, 2021).

Nigeria's agricultural sector remains central to the country's economic structure. The sector employs more than 50 percent of the labor force and contributes substantially to national food production and rural livelihoods (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Despite its importance, agricultural development in Nigeria has increasingly been undermined by widespread insecurity, particularly the escalating conflicts between herders and farmers across the Middle Belt region. What were once seasonal disputes over grazing routes have gradually evolved into violent confrontations involving destruction of farmland, loss of lives, and displacement of entire communities (Adelaja & George, 2021).

Benue State represents one of the region's most severely affected by these conflicts. Often referred to as the "Food Basket of the Nation," the state depends heavily on smallholder farming for economic sustenance and food production. However, the intensification of herdsmen attacks over the past decade has significantly disrupted agricultural activities in the state (Ijirshar, Ker and Terlumun, 2021). Numerous farming communities have experienced repeated violent attacks that resulted in destruction of crops, burning of homes, displacement of residents, and abandonment of farmland.

Guma Local Government Area (LGA) is widely recognized as one of the epicenters of the herder-farmer conflict in Benue State. Many farming households in the area have been displaced into Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps following repeated attacks. These attacks have had profound consequences for the household economy, including reduced agricultural production, declining income levels, food insecurity, and increased dependence on humanitarian assistance.

Although the herder-farmer conflict has attracted growing scholarly attention in Nigeria, much of the existing literature such as studies by Umeh, (2017) and Onyemelukwe and Adebola, (2022) focused on national or state-level impacts on agricultural productivity and food security. Relatively few studies such as studies by Ijirshar, et al, (2021) and Nomor and Ominyi, (2021), focus narrowly on specific crops or isolated economic indicators and have neglected an integrated analysis of household economy variables such as income, consumption patterns, and coping strategies, particularly at the micro-level in highly affected areas like Guma Local Government Area, thereby creating a gap that the present study seeks to fill. Against this background, this study examines the effects of herdsmen attacks on the household economy of farming households in Guma LGA of Benue State.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Perspectives

According to Folger, Poole and Stutman (2021), conflict is an interaction between two groups (whether tribal, ethnic, linguistic, religious, socio-economic, political or others) in which the involved participants engage in mutually opposing actions, and use coercive behaviour to destroy, injure, thwart or otherwise control their opponents. Herdsmen-Farmer's conflict is therefore, the interaction between the Fulani Herders and farmers in which they engage in mutually opposing actions and use coercive behaviour to destroy, injure and even kill their opponents. According to Okoro (2018), herdsmen-farmer conflict is conflict occurring between peasant farmers or subsistence cultivators and nomadic or transhumant live-stock keepers. To Amao, Adeagbo, Olojede, Ogunleye and Ogundoyin (2018), Farmer-herdsmen conflict has remained the most preponderant resource-use conflict in Nigeria. This conflict had

led to damage of crops, attacks on cattle, destruction of properties, killings of people and cattle rustling. Ugo (2025) explains that the terms “herders–farmers conflict” and “farmers–herders conflict” are often used interchangeably based on the preference of the writer; however, from a taxonomic standpoint, the ordering of the terms reflects the direction of aggression. Thus, the expression “herders–farmers conflict” is more appropriate in situations where herders are the aggressors and farmers are the victims. Therefore, this study looking at how this conflict affect farmers, narrows it to herdsmen attack which can be defined in this study as organized or semi-organized violent incursions by pastoralist groups into farming communities, resulting in destruction of crops, burning of homes, killings, and forced displacement. These attacks directly undermine the productive base of farming households and represent a critical shock to household economic systems.

The concept of household economy has been defined and examined by various scholars, reflecting its importance in understanding how households manage and allocate their resources. For example, Smith & Johnson (2020) define the household economy as the sum of all economic activities carried out within a household, including labor, production, consumption, and investment. They emphasize the importance of labour allocation within the household, particularly in agricultural communities where family members contribute to farm work and other economic activities. On the other hand, Rodriguez & Silva (2021), described the household economy as a dynamic system influenced by external factors such as market conditions, government policies, and social norms. They argue that understanding the household economy requires an analysis of both internal household dynamics and external influences. Kumar & Patel (2023) took a holistic approach, defining the household economy as the interplay between economic, social, and cultural factors that determine how households manage their resources. They emphasize that household economy is not just about financial transactions but also about the values and norms that guide economic behavior within the family. This broader perspective considers the impact of cultural practices on economic decision-making and resource allocation.

Adebayo & Olaniyi (2021) define the household economy as the system through which households generate income, allocate resources, and make decisions to ensure their survival and well-being. This definition emphasizes the economic activities carried out within the family unit, such as farming, trading, and other income-generating endeavors that sustain the household. Ibrahim & Musa (2022) extend this definition by highlighting the role of social and economic networks in the household economy. They argue that household economies are not isolated systems but are interconnected with broader community networks, which provide support and resources. This interconnection allows households to adapt to economic changes and shocks by relying on community ties, which are crucial in times of crisis. Okoro & Eze (2023) on the other hand describes the household economy as the microeconomic foundation of society, where decisions regarding consumption, investment, and savings are made. Their definition underscores the role of the household economy in influencing broader economic trends, as household spending and saving patterns directly impact local and national economies. They emphasize the importance of understanding household economic behavior to develop effective economic policies.

Adefolalu & Onyekwere (2024) took a bit of different perspective as they focused on the sustainability aspect of the household economy, defining it as the management of resources within the household to ensure long-term economic stability and environmental stewardship. They argue that a sustainable household economy is one that balances

immediate needs with future security, considering both economic and environmental factors in decision-making processes. For this study, the researcher defines the household economy, particularly in rural contexts, to refer to economic activities and resource management practices of a household, encompassing both farming and off-farm businesses and their consumption level.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is anchored on four complementary perspectives; Conflict Theory, Sustainable Social/Household Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, and Frustration–Aggression Theory, which together provide a multidimensional explanation of herdsmen attacks and their effects on household economy in Guma LGA of Benue State. Conflict Theory, propounded by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1848), posits that society is characterized by competition over scarce resources such as land and economic opportunities, leading to inevitable conflict between groups. This theory is particularly relevant in explaining the persistent clashes between herders and farmers in Guma, where both groups compete for land and water resources essential for their livelihoods. The theory highlights how structural inequalities and resource scarcity result in violence, destruction of farmlands, loss of assets, and reduced agricultural productivity, thereby weakening household economic stability.

Complementing this structural perspective, Sustainable Social/Household Theory, associated with Anthony Giddens (1990), emphasizes the need for households to maintain resilience through stable income, efficient resource management, and adaptive capacity in the face of shocks. In the context of Guma LGA, herdsmen attacks disrupt farming activities, destroy assets, and displace households, thereby undermining both immediate survival and long-term sustainability. The theory explains why affected households experience declining consumption levels and are forced to adopt coping strategies such as income diversification, asset liquidation, and reliance on social networks or aid. However, its assumption of institutional capacity for long-term planning may be limited in conflict-prone and impoverished settings like rural Benue.

Ecological Systems Theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), further enriches the framework by explaining how household outcomes are shaped by multiple interacting environmental systems. The theory shows that herdsmen attacks affect not only individual households (microsystem) through loss of crops and displacement, but also disrupt community interactions (mesosystem), weaken institutional responses such as security and governance (exosystem), and are influenced by broader cultural norms and policies on land use (macrosystem), as well as the cumulative effects of repeated conflicts over time (chronosystem). This multi-layered perspective helps explain the widespread and interconnected impacts of the conflict on agricultural output, income, and household welfare in Guma.

Finally, Frustration–Aggression Theory, propounded by Dollard et al. (1939) and later refined by Miller (1941), provides a psychological explanation for the persistence and escalation of violence. The theory argues that aggression arises when individuals or groups are prevented from achieving their goals. In Guma LGA, farmers become frustrated when their crops and livelihoods are destroyed, while herders experience frustration due to restricted grazing routes and environmental pressures. These frustrations often lead to cycles of retaliatory violence, further deepening insecurity and economic hardship. Together, these four theories offer a comprehensive framework that explains the structural, economic,

environmental, and psychological dimensions of herdsmen attacks, thereby providing a robust basis for analyzing their effects on agricultural output, household income, consumption patterns, and coping strategies in Guma LGA.

2.3 Empirical Review

Empirical literature reveals that herdsmen–farmers conflict has far-reaching and interconnected effects on agricultural production, income, and the overall household economy, particularly in Benue State and other conflict-prone regions. Studies such as Nyajo et al. (2024), Oriko et al. (2024), Nomor and Ikyoyer (2022) and Ijirshar et al. (2021) consistently demonstrate that conflict intensity significantly reduces crop output due to displacement of farmers, destruction of farm inputs, loss of labour, and fear-induced abandonment of farmlands, thereby disrupting the entire agricultural production process. In a related study, Alao et al. (2019) found a negative relationship between herdsmen violence and specific crop production, although overall food security outcomes were shown to be influenced by multiple interacting factors.

Beyond agricultural production, evidence from Abdullahi and Olayemi (2024), Ibrahim (2024) and Nomor and Ominyi, (2021) indicates that the conflict also severely affects non-farm income, leading to substantial declines in off-farm business activities, disruption of market access, and increased household vulnerability. This trend is further supported by studies conducted in other African contexts, including Mwangi (2023), Kiprotich (2023), Osei (2023), and Kamara (2023), all of which report significant reductions in off-farm income, weakened business performance, and increased economic instability as a result of conflict.

At the household level, studies such as Obi (2023), Aan (2019), and Francis et al. (2019) highlight that herdsmen attacks contribute to food insecurity, displacement, poverty, and destruction of productive assets, thereby undermining both immediate welfare and long-term livelihood sustainability. Furthermore, earlier works by Ajibefun (2018), Imo (2017), and Aliyu, Ikedinma and Akinwande (2018) attribute the persistence of these conflicts to structural factors such as land scarcity, population pressure, climate change, and weak institutional arrangements, which intensify competition over scarce resources. However, despite these extensive contributions, most existing studies examine the impacts of conflict in isolation, focusing either on agricultural output or income, while neglecting a comprehensive household economy perspective that integrates production, income, consumption patterns, and coping strategies.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design to examine the effects of herdsmen attacks on the household economy of farming households in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State. The population of the study consisted of farming households displaced by herdsmen attacks and residing in selected Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps and host communities within the study area. According to data obtained from the Benue State Emergency Management Agency (2025), the estimated population of displaced persons in the selected communities was 60,445 individuals. To determine the sample size, the Taro Yamane sampling formula was employed, which produced a sample size of 400 respondents. To account for potential non-response or incomplete questionnaires, an additional 10 percent buffer was added, bringing the total sample size to 440 respondents.

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select respondents. First, conflict-affected communities and IDP camps were purposively selected based on the intensity of herdsmen attacks. Second, households within these locations were randomly selected. Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to household heads, with the assistance of trained research assistants who were familiar with the local language and cultural context. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the socio-economic characteristics of respondents and identify coping strategies adopted by households. Regression analysis was employed to estimate the relationship between exposure to herdsmen attacks and household economic outcomes.

3.1 Econometric Model Specification

The Household economy was proxied by household income and household consumption level as argued by Ironmonger, (2001). According to Ironmonger (2001), household economy is called the household sector as distinct from the business. However, the household sector is large enough to deserve the term household economy. The rest of the economy can then be called the market economy. Thus, the transaction between the market and the household entails sale of factors of production to earn income and consumption expenditure on goods and services. Therefore, two regression model were specified and analysed in this study.

Model 1: Household Income Model

$$HI = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 FA + \alpha_2 DD + \alpha_3 ND + \alpha_4 MHL + \alpha_5 FSL + \varepsilon \text{-----} 1'$$

Where

HI = Household income

FA = Frequency of attacks

DD = Duration of displacement

ND = Number of displacements

MHL = Man hour loss

FSL = Farm size lost

α_0 is the intercept of the model, $\alpha_1 - \alpha_8$ are the parameters to be estimated and ε is the error term.

Model 2: Consumption Level Model

$$CONS = \varphi_0 + \varphi_1 FA + \varphi_2 DD + \varphi_3 ND + \varphi_4 MHL + \varphi_5 FSL + \varepsilon \text{-----} 2$$

Where

CONS = Consumption level of household

FA = Frequency of attacks

DD = Duration of displacement

ND = Number of displacements

MHL = Man hour loss

FSL = Farm size lost

φ_0 is the intercept of the model and $\varphi_1 - \varphi_7$ are the parameters to be estimated and ε is the error term.

3.2 Measurement of Variables

Table 1: Definition and measurement of dependent variables

Variable Category	Variable	Operational Definition	Measurement / Scale
Dependent Variables	Household Income Change (INCOME)	Household income change refers to the percentage change in total household income after herdsmen attacks relative to household income before the attacks, capturing income loss or gain attributable to the conflict.	Measured as percentage change computed as:
	Household Consumption Level (CONS)	Household consumption level refers to the quantity and frequency of food and essential non-food items consumed by the household, reflecting welfare changes arising from herdsmen attacks and income shocks.	Measured using household food expenditure, number of meals consumed per day, and monthly expenditure on basic needs. Ratio-scale continuous variable.
Key Independent Variables (Herdsmen Attacks)	Frequency of Herdsmen Attacks (FA)	Frequency of herdsmen attacks refers to the number of times a household or its community experienced herdsmen-related violent attacks within the reference period.	Measured as the total count of reported attack incidents (0, 1, 2, 3, etc.). Ratio-scale count variable.
	Number of Times Displaced (ND)	Number of times displaced refers to the total number of separate occasions a household was forced to leave its residence or farmland as a result of herdsmen attacks.	Measured as a count of displacement episodes (1 time, 2 times, 3 times, etc.) as reported by respondents. Ratio-scale count variable.
	Duration of Displacement (DD)	Duration of displacement refers to the total length of time a household stayed away from its original residence or farmland due to herdsmen attacks.	Measured in total number of months displaced. Ratio-scale continuous variable.
	Man-Hours Lost (MHL)	Man-hours lost represent the total productive farming hours lost due to fear, displacement, injury, or inability to access farmland following herdsmen attacks.	Measured in estimated number of farming hours lost per month. Ratio-scale continuous variable.
	Farmers' Loss Size (FLS)	Farmers' loss size refers to the total monetary value of crops destroyed, livestock lost, farm inputs damaged, and other agricultural assets lost as a direct result of herdsmen attacks.	Measured in Nigerian Naira (₦) based on respondents' estimated value of total losses incurred. Ratio-scale continuous variable.

Source: Researchers Concept

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Understanding the socio-economic profile of respondents is important because household demographic and economic characteristics influence agricultural productivity, income generation, and coping capacity in conflict-affected environments. The socio-economic characteristics of the sampled farming households in Guma LGA are presented in Table 1.

Table 2: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age (years)	20–29	62	15.50
	30–39	118	29.50
	40–49	106	26.50
	50–59	74	18.50
	60 and above	40	10.00
Sex	Male	164	41.00
	Female	236	59.00
Household Size	1–5 persons	84	21.00
	6–10 persons	136	34.00
	11–15 persons	125	31.25
	Above 15 persons	55	13.75
Education Level	No formal education	82	20.50
	Primary education	74	18.50
	Secondary education	228	57.00
	Tertiary education	16	4.00
Farming Experience	1–10 years	92	23.00
	11–20 years	168	42.00
	Above 20 years	140	35.00

Source: Field Survey (2025)

In table 2, the age distribution of respondents shows that most are within the 30–49 years range, accounting for over 56% of the sample. This indicates that the majority of household heads and farm operators are in their prime working age, which is likely to enhance labor availability for farming activities. A smaller proportion of respondents are either younger (20–29 years) or older (60 years and above), groups that may be less engaged in physically demanding agricultural work. This age pattern is important in understanding agricultural output, as households with more working-age members may better sustain production even under conflict-related disruptions such as displacement or attacks.

The sex composition reveals that 59% of respondents are female. This suggests that women play a significant role in agricultural production and household economic activities in the study area. Given the context of conflict, female-headed households may face unique challenges in maintaining farm productivity and income, particularly if male members are more likely to be displaced or affected by violence. Recognizing the gender distribution is therefore critical for assessing vulnerability and resilience in both agricultural output and household income.

Household size is another key factor influencing economic capacity. Most households (65.25%) have between 6 and 15 members, indicating a moderate to large household size. Larger households can provide more labor for farming, potentially mitigating some negative effects of disruptions. However, larger households also have higher consumption needs, which could strain household income, particularly in situations of farm loss or reduced production.

Education levels among respondents are predominantly at the secondary level (57%), with a smaller proportion having no formal education (20.5%) or tertiary education (4%). Moderate education levels suggest that most households have basic literacy and skills that can support improved farming practices and income diversification. Education can also influence decision-making and the ability to adapt to economic shocks caused by conflict, thereby affecting both agricultural output and household income.

Finally, farming experience is substantial, with 77% of respondents having more than 10 years of experience. Experienced farmers are likely to possess knowledge of best practices, resource management, and coping strategies during periods of disruption. This experience can help maintain agricultural productivity and income levels despite challenges such as attacks, displacement, or loss of farm labor.

4.3 Effect of Herdsmen Attacks on Household Income

To examine the effect of herdsmen attacks on the income of farming households, a regression model was estimated. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Regression Estimates of Household Income

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Probability
Frequency of Attacks (FA)	-0.748723	0.234238	-3.196419	0.0011
Duration of Displacement (DD)	-0.832459	0.368923	-2.256457	0.0321
Number of Displacements (ND)	-0.856893	0.348456	-2.459114	0.0123
Man- hour Loss (MHL)	0.756893	0.491498	1.966657	0.0499
Farm Size Lost (FSL)	-6.367892	2.112300	-3.014672	0.0021
Constant	-95.45323	35.89232	-2.659433	0.0099

Model Statistics:

Statistic	Value
R-Squared	0.727182
Adjusted R-Squared	0.707278
F-Statistic	11.365635
Prob(F-Statistic)	0.0000200

Source: Researchers' computation (2025)

The result in Table 3 indicates that conflict-related factors have a substantial impact on household income. The model explains approximately 72.7% of the variation in household income ($R^2 = 0.727$), and the F-statistic of 11.37 ($p = 0.00002$) confirms that the set of independent variables jointly have a significant effect on income.

Among the variables, the frequency of attacks (FA) has a coefficient of -0.749 ($p = 0.0011$), meaning that for each additional attack experienced, household income decreases by approximately 0.75 units, holding other factors constant. The duration of displacement (DD) also reduces income, with a coefficient of -0.832 ($p = 0.0321$), indicating that longer periods away from home significantly reduce earnings. Similarly, the number of displacements (ND) has a coefficient of -0.857 ($p = 0.0123$), showing that repeated displacement events further lower household income.

The loss of farmland is the most severe economic shock, with farm size lost (FSL) carrying a coefficient of -6.368 ($p = 0.0021$). This suggests that losing one unit of farm area reduces household income by over 6 units, emphasizing how critical land is to household livelihoods. Interestingly, man-hour loss (MHL) has a positive coefficient of 0.757 ($p = 0.0499$), implying that households experiencing labor loss may partially compensate by intensifying work or diversifying income sources.

4.3 Effect of Herdsmen Attacks on Household Consumption Level

To examine the effect of herdsmen attacks on the household consumption level of farming households, a regression model was estimated. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Regression Estimates of Household Consumption Level

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
FA	-1.528945	0.517232	-2.956013	0.0128
DD	-0.635234	0.279345	-2.274012	0.0411
ND	-0.982340	0.245698	-3.998160	0.0030
MHL	-0.852344	0.310002	-2.749497	0.0134
FSL	0.102331	0.523457	0.195490	0.4115
C	420477.8	68206.31	6.164794	0.0000

Model Statistics:

Statistic	Value
R-Squared	0.813882
Adjusted R-Squared	0.798059
F-Statistic	7.197023
Prob(F-Statistic)	0.000000

Source: Researchers' computation (2025)

The regression results show that herdsmen attacks have a significant negative effect on the consumption level of farming households. The model explains about 81.4% of the variation in consumption levels ($R^2 = 0.814$), and the F-statistic of 7.20 ($p < 0.001$) indicates that the explanatory variables collectively have a strong and statistically significant effect on household consumption. This suggests that conflict-related disruptions are major determinants of households' welfare.

Specifically, the frequency of attacks (FA) has a coefficient of -1.529 ($p = 0.0128$), meaning that each additional attack reduces household consumption by approximately 1.53 units. Similarly, the duration of displacement (DD) has a negative coefficient of -0.635 ($p = 0.0411$), indicating that households displaced for longer periods experience lower consumption levels. The number of displacements (ND) also significantly decreases consumption (coefficient = -0.982, $p = 0.0030$), highlighting those repeated relocations compound economic hardship. Additionally, man-hour loss (MHL) has a negative effect (coefficient = -0.852, $p = 0.0134$), showing that reductions in labor availability directly constrain households' ability to produce or earn for consumption.

Interestingly, farm size lost (FSL) has a small positive but statistically insignificant effect on consumption (coefficient = 0.102, $p = 0.4115$), suggesting that the amount of farmland lost does not have a measurable impact on immediate consumption in this sample. The constant term (420,478, $p < 0.001$) represents the baseline consumption level when all conflict-related variables are zero, reflecting the average consumption of households not affected by attacks or displacement.

4.4 Coping Strategies Adopted by Displaced Households

Households affected by herdsmen attacks employ various coping strategies to manage economic shocks. Table 5 presents the coping strategies adopted by women in IDP camps.

Table 5: Livelihood Coping Strategies in IDP Camps

Coping Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Petty retailing	25	7.10
Farming for money	38	10.80
Hawking	21	5.97
House cleaning services	46	13.07
Construction work	28	7.95
Saloon business	12	3.41
Support from relatives	67	19.03
Commercial sex activities	8	2.27
Support from NGOs	39	11.08
Communal living	68	19.32

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Households affected by herdsmen attacks adopt a variety of coping strategies to mitigate the economic shocks caused by displacement and loss of livelihoods. The survey results in Table 6 show that communal living (19.32%) and support from relatives (19.03%) are the most prevalent strategies among displaced households, highlighting the critical role of social networks and family ties in ensuring basic survival. These findings suggest that displaced households rely heavily on collective support systems and extended family assistance to cope with reduced income, food insecurity, and the loss of personal assets.

Other notable strategies include engaging in domestic labor services such as house cleaning (13.07%), receiving support from non-governmental organizations (11.08%), and farming for income (10.80%), which indicate attempts to generate alternative livelihoods even within the constraints of IDP camps. Less common strategies, such as petty retailing (7.10%), construction work (7.95%), and hawking (5.97%), reflect the resourcefulness of displaced households in seeking small-scale income opportunities. A small proportion of women (2.27%) reported engaging in commercial sex activities, signaling the emergence of high-risk coping mechanisms among the most vulnerable, driven by extreme economic pressure.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that herdsmen attacks significantly undermine the economic well-being of farming households. The regression results show that the frequency of attacks, duration of displacement, and number of displacements all have negative and statistically significant effects on both household income and consumption levels. Specifically, repeated or prolonged attacks and displacement reduce earnings and limit households' ability to meet basic needs. Farm size lost has the largest negative effect on income, highlighting the critical role of productive land in sustaining livelihoods. Interestingly, while man-hour loss negatively affects consumption, it has a marginally positive effect on income, suggesting that households attempt to compensate for lost labor through intensified work or income diversification, although these measures are insufficient to fully protect consumption. These results consolidate previous result by FAO (2021), Ijirshar et al. (2021) and Adelaja and George (2021).

The study also highlights the coping strategies adopted by displaced households, particularly women in IDP camps. Communal living (19.32%) and support from relatives (19.03%) are the most common strategies, emphasizing the importance of social networks in buffering economic shocks. Other strategies, such as domestic labor (13.07%), NGO support (11.08%), and farming for income (10.80%), reflect households' efforts to generate alternative livelihoods under constrained circumstances. However, the emergence of risky strategies, including commercial sex work (2.27%), underscores the extreme vulnerability of some groups and the pressures imposed by economic deprivation.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, herdsmen attack not only reduce household income and consumption but also force households to adopt coping mechanisms that vary in sustainability and risk. To mitigate these impacts, it is recommended that policymakers strengthen social support systems, protect farmland and other productive assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities, particularly for displaced women. Enhanced NGO and government assistance, combined with conflict prevention measures such as dialogue initiatives and early warning systems, is crucial to reduce the frequency of attacks and help households recover economically. By addressing both the immediate and long-term needs of affected households, these interventions can improve resilience and safeguard the welfare of vulnerable farming communities.

Reference

Aan, J. T. (2019). Entrepreneurship development and the socio-economic implications of herdsmen attacks in Benue State, Nigeria. *Social Science and Humanities Journal*, 3(11), 1641-1655.

- Abdullahi, M. T., & Olayemi, O. A. (2024). Herdsmen-farmers conflict and its impact on off-farm businesses in North Central Nigeria. *Journal of Agricultural and Rural Development*, 29(3), 45-62.
- Adebayo, T., & Olaniyi, F. (2021). Household economy and resource allocation in rural Nigeria. *Journal of Nigerian Economic Studies*, 8(1), 45-60.
- Adefolalu, B., & Onyekwere, T. (2024). Sustainability in household economies: Balancing immediate needs with future security. *Environmental and Economic Studies in Nigeria*, 11(1), 22-39.
- Adelaja, A., & George, J. (2021). Effects of conflict on agriculture in Nigeria. *World Development*, 142, 105-120.
- Alao, D. O., Shaibume, B., Ogunwemimo, T., Alao, E. M., & Ogunwemimo, O. (2019). Herdsmen/native farmers' violence in benue state and food security in Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 10(6), 38-48. <https://doi.org/10.36941/mjss-2019-0077>.
- Aliyu, M. K., Ikedinma, H. A. & Akinwande, A. E. (2018). Assessment of the Effect of Farmers-Herdsmen Conflicts on National Integration in Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 8(10), 118-128. doi:10.30845/ijhss.v8n10p13
- Amao O., Adeagbo T. A., Olojede M. O, Ogunleye B. T & Ogundoyin C. O. (2018) Effects of fulani herdsmen conflict on productivity of arable crop farmers in Ibarapa areas of Oyo State. *International Journal for Research in Social Science and Humanities*, 4(7), 1-12.
- Audu, S. D. (2023). Conflicts among farmers and pastoralists in northern Nigeria induced by fresh water scarcity. *Developing Country Studies*, 3(12), 25-32.
- Benjaminsen, T., & Ba, B. (2020). Fulani-farmer conflicts in West Africa. *Geographical Journal*, 186(2), 189-201.
- Blench, R. (2014). *Pastoralism in Nigeria: Its status and challenges*. Abuja: FAO.
- Folger J. P., Poole M. S. & Stutman, R. K. (2009). *Working through Conflict Strategies for Relationships, Group and Organizations*. USA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Folger, J. P., Poole, M. S., & Stutman, R. K. (2021). *Working through conflict: Strategies for relationships, groups, and organizations*. Routledge.
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). (2021). *The impact of conflict on food security*. Rome: FAO.
- Francis, E., Bawa, Y. B., & Haruna, M. S. (2019). Impact of Farmers and Fulani Herdsmen Conflict on Socio-Economic Activities in Agatu LGA of Benue State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Social Sciences and Management Studies*, 4(2), 12-24.
- Ibrahim, K., & Musa, A. (2022). The role of social networks in sustaining household economies: Evidence from Nigeria. *African Journal of Economic Research*, 15(2), 78-94.
- Ibrahim, S. A. (2024). The economic impact of herdsmen-farmer conflict on off-farm income in Benue State, Nigeria. *African Economic Review*, 18(1), 75-88.
- Ide, T., (2021). Climate change and farmer-herder conflict in Africa. *Global Environmental Change*, 65, 102-112.
- Idris, H., Dim, C., & Ugwu, O. (2018). Herdsmen and farmers conflicts in North-Eastern Nigeria: Causes, repercussions and resolutions. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(3), 327-340.
- Ijirshar, V. U., Ker, G., & Terlumun, Y. C. (2021). Socio-economic effects of Farmers-Fulani herdsmen's conflict on farmers' output in Benue, Nigeria. In: F. S. Bakpo & F. E. Ugbeda (Eds.), *Proceedings of an International Academic Conference of the International Multidisciplinary Research and Academic Society*, Obudu, Cross River State: Nigeria.
- Imo, C. K. (2017). The demographic implications of nomadic herdsmen and farmers clashes in Nigeria. *International Journal of Development and Management Review*. 12(1), 45-58.

- Ioryue, D. A. (2024). Farmer-herder conflict and national security in Nigeria: The Benue State perspective. journals.fukashere.edu.ng
- Ironmongerc, D. (2001). Household Production and the Household Economy. International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences.
- Kamara, M. L. (2023). The Impact of Farmer-Herdsman Conflict on Non-Agricultural Enterprises in Sierra Leone. *Journal of African Development and Conflict Resolution*, 19(2), 102-120.
- Kiprotich, P. L. (2023). Socio-Economic Effects of Herdsmen-Farmers Conflict On Off-Farm Enterprises in Turkana County, Kenya. *African Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 21(1), 85-99.
- Kumar, R., & Patel, S. (2023). Cultural practices and the household economy: A holistic approach. *Journal of Economic Anthropology*, 7(4), 134-150.
- Mustafa, I. A., & Sa'ad, I. (2025). Analysing the causes and effects of farmer-herder conflict in Benue State, Nigeria. journals.unizik.edu.ng
- Mwangi, J. N. (2023). impact of herdsmen-farmers conflict on off-farm business sustainability in Northern Kenya. *East African Journal of Development Studies*, 15(2), 102-118.
- National Bureau of Statistics (2023). *Agricultural sector statistics report*. Abuja.
- Nomor, D. T. & Ikyoyer, F. I. (2022). The impact of the herdsmen-crop farmers' conflict on the productivity of yam farmers in logo local government area of Benue state. *Nigeria. Journal of Management and Contemporary Studies*. 2(1), 191-202.
- Nomor, D.T. & Ominyi, S.O. (2021). The impact of herdsmen-farmers' conflict on small off-farm businesses in Benue State. *Journal of Economics and Allied Research*, 6(3), 51-61.
- Nyajo, V. Aye, G. C. and Iorlamen, T. R. (2024) Effects of farmers-herdsmen conflicts on maize productivity in Benue state, Nigeria. *Journal of Agricultural Economics, Extension and Science*, 10(1), 92 – 116.
- Obi, N. (2023). Effects of farmers-herders conflicts on food security in agatu local government area of Benue State, Nigeria. *NIU Journal of Social Sciences*. 9(3): 159-167
- Obikaeze, C. V., Oduntan, J. O., Fajobi, T., Kayode, G., & Eteng, E. (2023). Herders-farmers conflict over farmlands and implications for human and food security in Nigeria. journals.abuad.edu.ng
- Ogbe, J. E., & Ogali, M. D. (2022). Farmers-herders' conflict and agricultural development in Benue State. *EconPapers*
- Okoro, J. P (2018). Herdsmen/farmers conflict and its effects on socio-economic development in Nigeria. *Journal of Peace, Security, and Development*. 4(1),143-158.
- Okoro, C., & Eze, N. (2023). Household economy as the microeconomic foundation: Implications for policy in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Economic Policy*, 10(3), 113-129.
- Omole, F. (2018). Land use conflicts between farmers and herdsmen – Implications for agricultural and rural development in Nigeria. *Journal of Environmental Issues and Agriculture in Developing Countries*, 3(1), 45-61.
- Oriko, S. E., Ismaila, M. D. & Ogbaini, C. A. (2024). Navigating challenges: herdsmen-crop farmers conflict and its effect on yam productivity in Benue State. *Jurnal Pendidikan Ekonomi*. 9(2), 163-171.
- Osei, K. A. (2023). Herdsmen-Farmers Conflict and Its Effect on Off-Farm Livelihoods in Northern Ghana. *West African Economic Review*, 12(3), 55-70.
- Rodriguez, P., & Silva, M. (2021). Resilience strategies in household economies: Coping with external shocks. *Journal of Global Economic Studies*, 19(3), 89-106.
- Smith, J., & Johnson, L. (2020). Labor allocation and the household economy in agricultural communities. *International Journal of Rural Economics*, 14(2), 56-73.
- Umeh, J. C. (2017). *Agricultural economics and policy in Nigeria*. University of Agriculture Press.
- World Bank (2022). *Conflict and food security in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington DC.