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Assessing the Consequences of Ethno-Religious Violence on Farming Activities in Jos Plateau State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Ethno-religious violence in Jos, Plateau State severely hampers farming activities, causing reduced production, farmer displacement, and destruction of infrastructure. These challenges deepen poverty and food scarcity, necessitating urgent remedial actions. The study used a descriptive, cross-sectional survey research design. A sample size of 400 respondents was selected from the total population of 1,260,200 using the Tare Yamane formula. Questionnaires were distributed to 400 randomly selected respondents across Jos North, Jos South, and Jos East LGA. Interviews were also conducted with six key informants to complement the data gathered from the questionnaires. Responses from the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages. Quantitative data were analysed while outlining the key point presented by the key informant. The study revealed that ethno-religious violence in Jos Plateau State disrupts farming through reduced production, displacement of farmers, and destruction of infrastructure. Trauma leads to poverty, hunger, and impaired farm management. The study recommended that addressing ethno-religious conflict in Jos Plateau requires improved security, conflict resolution, and emergency aid for displaced farmers.

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Rehabilitation efforts should prioritise rebuilding infrastructure, financial support, resettlement, and mental health services for affected farmers.

Keywords: Ethno-Religious, Violence, Educational Activities

INTRODUCTION

Ethno-religious violence is a common phenomenon in world history and there is hardly any race that has not at a particular point in time experienced it. It was on this note that Omoregbe (2012) posited that the world's religious holy books, the Quran and the Bible, recorded how our forefathers in the past went through either ethnic crises, religious crises or ethnoreligious crises at various points in time. This, however, suggests that ethno-religious violence is neither peculiar to Nigeria nor a phenomenon that raised its ugly head in recent times. In Europe, for instance in Poland, Ukraine, Russia, Hungary and Albania, as well as Romania, the minorities that have endured years of economic and social discrimination have recently demanded inclusive government which other dominant ethnic groups interpreted as arrogance and offensive. It has resulted in several theatres of violence, some with outright manipulations of those in power (Francis, 2020).

Similarly, many African countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, Somalia, Sudan, Burundi and many more have experienced a series of conflicts, that occurred between communities, ethnic groups and religious groups (Schwartz, 2010). The reminiscence of the 1994 Rwanda genocide is still fresh in memories, and it is a pointer to the question of inter-ethnic hegemony and cultural differences among the Tutsi, Hutu and Twa ethnic groups. A record of between 100,000 and 500,000 people died across Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa with significant casualties from the Tutsi ethnic group (Francis, 2020). Africa has also witnessed one of its deadliest conflicts in Congo after the Second World War when three Congolese Rebel Movements backed by ethnic groups engaged in the clashes that claimed the lives of over 3.3 million Congolese (Keefer & Knack, 2021). This left an indelible mark on the continent. In Nigeria, like other African countries, violent inter-ethnic conflict is widely experienced. The growing number of violent crimes, ethnic and religious killings, kidnapping, communal clashes, politically motivated violence, militancy, suicide bombing and banditry have increasingly become a common phenomenon in Nigerian society. Over the years, the deteriorating nature of the ethnic, communal,

religious, and political crisis in the country has had a damaging effect on the security situation in Nigeria, forcing the elites as well as the poor to agonise over human, material, and immaterial losses across the country (Age, 2021).

Ameh and Geoffrey (2024) were of the view that ethno-religious violence affects socio-economic activities in Jos Plateau State. Socio-economic activities such as trading and marketing activities in Jos often suffer as a result of ethno-religious violence. Violence based on religion or race made it harder to trade and market goods because prices went up quickly, shops and their valuables were destroyed, and there was less demand and supply of goods between and within states. Similarly, ethno-religious violence exacerbates poverty and hunger among traders and marketers, leads to the loss of lives and livelihoods, reduces their access to loans from commercial and microfinance banks due to forceful shutdowns, and forces them to flee their homes and shops. Thus, ethno-religious violence has left an untold adverse effect on the socio-economic activities of the people of Jos Plateau State (Ameh & Geoffrey, 2024).

Apart from human lives and livestock, residential accommodation has been one of the major casualties of the conflicts in Jos Plateau State (Effiong & Owolabi, 2022). Houses give shelter to farmers to rest after daily activities and also provide comfort for proper planning on how to carry out the next activities. However, most houses are destroyed during conflicts. According to Effiong and Owolabi (2022), a large number of farmers are forcefully displaced due to the large-scale destruction of houses, places of worship and shops. With the displacement, farming activities are not taking place as some of the farmers are in camps while many others opted to relocate outside their normal places of abode or even outside the state for their safety. Conflicts affect both traders and farmers psychologically, mentally, emotionally and physically, impacting adversely on their ability to plan and make appropriate management decisions. These have negative effects on their livelihoods which are intertwined with agriculture. This is confirmed by the International Crises Group (ICG) (2018) which reported an estimated drop in food production from 65% to 33% in Benue, Nasarawa and Taraba States as a result of attacks and population displacement.

Similarly, the study by Soomiyol and Fadairo (2020) discovered that a lot of schools are often destroyed during ethno-religious violence, making it mandatory for interested students to trek long distances to attend schools in nearby communities. This makes most

of the youths who are the major source of farm labour unavailable for farm activities during the weekdays as they come home late from school. In areas where schools are present, they are in poor condition; the school buildings are dilapidated, it lack qualified teachers as most of the teachers run to other perceived safe communities to find employment; it also lacks the essential facilities and equipment to impact the desired knowledge on the students who should serve as agents of agricultural innovation transfer (Soomiyol & Fadairo, 2020).

Literature Review

Effiong and Owolabi (2022) posited that in addition to the loss of life and livestock, one of the main victims of the hostilities in north-central Nigeria has been residential accommodation. In addition to providing a place for farmers to recuperate from their daily labours, houses also afford them the comforts necessary for the thoughtful planning of agricultural operations. But during the conflict, the majority of homes are destroyed. Many farmers are forcibly relocated as a result of the widespread damage to homes, places of worship, and businesses, claim Effiong and Owolabi (2022). Farming has stopped as a result of the displacement; many farmers have chosen to migrate outside of their usual residences or even outside of the state for safety. Some farmers are living in camps. This, according to Ukwayi and Okpa (2017), explains why "violence has reached unprecedented levels and hundreds have been killed, with many more wounded or displaced from their homes on account of their ethnic or religious identification." A farmer's capacity to plan and make wise farm and management decisions is severely impacted by conflicts, which hurt them psychologically, mentally, emotionally, and physically. Their lives, which are entwined with agriculture, are negatively impacted by these. The International Crisis Group (ICG)(2018) verified this, estimating that violence and population relocation have resulted in a 33% to 65% decrease in food output in Benue, Nasarawa, and Taraba States. To support this argument, Ali (2018), for instance, showed that during the Takum/Ussa crisis years, there was a decrease in agricultural investment and yield, a drop in residents' income levels, a rise in social and residential segregation, and damages to millions of dollars' worth of lives and property. High rates of unemployment and poverty are the outcomes of these.

Furthermore, due mostly to insufficient health facilities and ongoing food instability, poor health and malnutrition are common in rural areas of north-central Nigeria (Age, 2019). Due to insufficient food, clean water, and restrooms in IDP camps, the situation

deteriorates rapidly during wars. This has an impact on other issues, particularly malnourishment and health. In such circumstances, an ill and undernourished individual cannot make a significant contribution to rural and agricultural growth. When there exist health facilities during a conflict, they are run-down, understaffed, and devoid of supplies and equipment. Farmers' health is directly affected by this, which affects their capacity to work well and raise agricultural productivity.

Based on his research, Escobal (2020) concludes that better market integration and lower transaction costs depend on the rural market. The increase in rural incomes will be impacted by the increased market efficiency that results from this. Yet, in north-central Nigeria, markets have emerged as hotspots for ethno-religious conflict, where farmers are expected to sell their crops. Farming becomes isolated from trade, among other reasons, when farm markets are destroyed. Effiong and Owolabi (2022) state that the majority of the booths and warehouses are destroyed during crises or burned down completely. While some farmers are forced to sell their food at lower prices to accessible consumers out of fear of complete loss, the majority of farmers leave their produce to rot on the field or at home out of fear of losing their commodities or being attacked in the market. The produce produced on the farm and its market pricing are impacted by this. Within and/or after crises, certain regions turn their accessible marketplaces into camps for internally displaced people (IDPs). Dura (2014) reports that the displaced people in Makurdi, the capital of Benue state, have taken up residence in elementary schools, markets, and other outdoor areas, rendering the market facilities unusable. In these situations, farmers in rural areas are forced to carry their produce to far-off markets to sell it. This results in significant transportation costs, which directly impact the produce's market price. The inability of the rural market to function has an impact on taxes, which means that the various state governments in these highly contentious areas lose money (Mercy, 2019).

Likewise, the majority of rural villages in north-central Nigeria lack pipe-borne water and boreholes. As a result, water for rural residents comes from rivers, ponds, streams, or wells that have been dug. When there is a conflict, the majority of the water sources are in poor condition and are often hazardous for human use since the cattle utilize them as a source of water and urinate into the water while drinking. In times of crisis, dead bodies are also dumped into wells, rendering the water unclean and dangerous for residential usage and drinking (Adelaja, 2019). People's health is directly impacted by water. When a farmer's ability to carry out agricultural tasks like irrigation farming is negatively impacted, it

eventually results in low or reduced output and, thus, bad agricultural development. When fighting breaks out, the herders move their cows to nearby settlements outside of the north-central zone in search of pasture and water. The zone's agricultural development is negatively impacted by this as well.

According to Njenga and Davis (2013), crop cultivation, crop harvesting, crop marketing, and the transportation of farm inputs are all related to agricultural travel. The majority of the study area's roads are rendered impassable during or after conflicts, according to a report (Effiong & Owolabi, 2022). Because customers from outside the communities cannot come to buy, and because the community members cannot get their produce to the point of sale, this has led to the loss of farm produce. To get to adjacent locations, farmers who take the risk must take lengthy detours, which raises the price of transportation and increases the cost of transferring goods and services. Most likely, the bulk of individuals that suffer the most are the occasional, farmers who are attacked and killed while travelling, and their produce is either spoiled or catered to (Adelaja & George, 2019).

This is consistent with the findings of Effiong and Owolabi (2022), who stated that several passenger cars and cargo trailers were damaged in Plateau State's repeated conflict. Due to the state of rural transportation during these times, efforts to develop rural and agricultural areas have been thwarted. This has led to several difficulties, including the isolation of many rural areas in the study area from larger nearby settlements, which has prevented them from accessing higher-order socio-economic services. As a result, there is a high rate of poverty among rural residents and low productivity (Aderamo & Magaji, 2018).

Security concerns during conflict cause the majority of financial institutions, including cooperatives, commercial banks, and microfinance banks, to be either destroyed or forced to close (Adelaja & George, 2019). The majority of farmers' land is either destroyed or taken over by their enemies, so even when they are available, they are in poor condition and rarely release loans to farmers who might not have the required collateral (land). During the battle, a significant number of farmers who obtained loans lost both their lives and some of their produce. Consequently, they are unable to pay back the loans. Financial institutions' ability to operate effectively in certain areas is hampered by this. Development in agriculture is therefore hampered.

In light of the impact that ethno-religious conflict has on the populace and their agricultural practices, it is evident that the extension operation suffers greatly when farmers

are uprooted and their land is left fallow, leaving the extension agent with very little to work with. Ani, Chikaire, Ogueri, and Orusha (2015) claim that extension agents frequently have to choose between their profession and their allegiance to the people who are in struggle in the towns, villages, and kindreds in which they work. In areas of conflict, where extension facilities are found at all, they are either non-operational or abandoned. For their safety, the majority of extension agents flee, and they hardly come back. Due to the available farmers' lack of knowledge about agricultural advances and techniques, this hurts the development of agriculture. Furthermore, the absence of well-functioning social organizations like cooperative societies and farmers' associations or groups deters extension agents from visiting conflict-prone areas because dealing with farmers face-to-face will be very time-consuming, and some may be too suspicious to give them the attention they need.

This supports Effiong and Owolabi's (2022) report, which found that conflicts have an impact on the delivery of extension services by making it more difficult to track farmers' progress, evaluate programs, implement projects, impact extension agents generally, and monitor farmers' relationships, among other things. Over time, this will impact agricultural output generally and thus lead to development.

Furthermore, improved communication is a critical component of agricultural progress. They can directly enhance farm incomes and prospects for private investment, lower marketing margins, boost competitiveness, and lower transportation costs (Fan & Zhang, 2014). It has been noted that during conflicts, communication networks are typically unavailable since network masks and other telecommunications infrastructure are frequently damaged. As a result, fewer people are using cell phones and other contemporary communication devices. This interferes with network connectivity. Moreover, communications systems may be momentarily shut down as part of the government's counterterrorism operations. This has an impact on communication, which acts as a conduit for goods and services between the farmers in the impacted rural areas and outside purchasers or providers of input. Consequently, the incapacity to remove farm produce at the right moment results in a significant loss of output. Consequently, farmers are forced to sell their produce at extremely low prices to the customers that are available, who are mostly middlemen looking to take advantage of the farmers to profit handsomely. However, they buy farm inputs at outrageous costs from nearby merchants, which always

hurts the pricing of produce on the market. Each of these has an impact on the amount of money made and the growth of agriculture (Adelaja & George, 2019).

Where power is available, it is often sparsely distributed and absent from most rural regions. However, most of the electric transformers that provide light to the neighbourhoods are damaged during times of conflict. Perishable agricultural products (vegetables, fruits, etc.) are impacted in terms of agro-processing and storage. A lack of electricity leads to a lack of value addition, which drives up the price of unprocessed farm produce sold at cheap rates, while some are allowed to perish. Electricity is essential for the processing of agricultural produce (Effiong & Owolabi, 2022).

Year-round preservation and cost-effective availability of farm produce are made possible by storage facilities. Pre- and post-harvest losses as well as price inflation can be prevented by allowing excess agricultural produce to be kept and distributed during the off-season. Some farmers even lose their stored products, including groundnuts, grains, and yams, while most storage structures, including rhombuses and barns, are destroyed during hostilities. Produce availability during the off-season is impacted by this, which can result in a shortage or an increase in market pricing. If there are any such facilities, they are often dilapidated and might not be able to hold agricultural products properly. Poor storage facilities can cause pre- and post-harvest losses, which endanger food security and hinder agricultural development in the research area (Soomiyol & Fadairo, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

Frustration-Aggression Theory

John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, O. H. Mowrer, and Robert Sears created the frustration-aggression paradigm in 1939, and Yate (1962) and Berkowitz (1963) expanded and refined it. According to Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears (1939), the general tenet of frustration-aggression theory is that all people have basic wants that they strive to fulfil and that any attempt by individuals or organizations to obstruct these requirements will result in violent reactions. In other words, frustration naturally leads to aggressiveness. When a society's structure directly or indirectly denies a person's or group's legitimate desires, the resulting frustration can drive these people or groups to express their anger through violent acts against those they believe are to blame for their misfortune (Yate, 1962; Berkowitz, 1963). People often turn to someone they can blame for not reaching

their goals or someone with whom they can vent their emotions when expectations are not met by achievement.

This theory suggests that when another person or group denies someone's wants, it can trigger anger and frustration, leading to the ethnic and religious violence currently plaguing Nigeria. The amount of violence between various ethnic and religious groups in Jos has recently escalated to the point that it should worry the entire country. Banditry has resulted from the abduction of people from all social strata. Not even powerful people and their bodyguards escape abuse, kidnapping, or murder. The global spread of sophisticated weapons as a result of aggression poses a serious threat to the safety of people and property in urban and rural areas (Samuel, 2020). However, the theory has been criticized for blaming aggression solely on frustration. The theory failed to acknowledge the fact that aggressiveness is not necessarily a product of frustration. Furthermore, the theory fell short of explaining why certain political leaders, motivated by self-interest, utilise their influence to incite violent conflict between different ethnic and religious groups. According to critics, an individual who is irritated by aggression can be calmed by social norms, law and order, ethics, morality, and values (Ameh & Geoffrey, 2024).

METHODS

The research adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. It used both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection which include the use of questionnaires and interview schedules. A sample size of 400 respondents was selected from the total population of 1,260,200 using the Tare Yamane formula. Questionnaires were distributed to 400 respondents who were randomly selected across Jos North, Jos South, and Jos East LGA. The study also employs key informant interviews (KII) to complement the questionnaire and to enable the researcher to get first-hand information on the reality of ethno-religious violence in Jos Plateau State. Responses from the questionnaire were computed in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the data. Similarly, thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data collected via key informant interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by effect of ethno-religious violence on farming activities in Jos, Plateau State.

Effect	Frequency	Percentage
Reduction in production of farm produce	101	26.3
Reduction in farmers' access to loans from commercial and microfinance banks as a result of forceful shutdown	45	11.7
loss of perishable farm products as buyers from outside cannot access the farmer	48	12.5
Destruction of farm produce markets	41	10.7
Destruction of farm lands alongside cultivated plants	82	21.3
Destruction of agricultural extension facilities and programs	21	5.5
destruction of storage facilities (e.g. rhombus, barns, warehouse etc.)	43	11.2
Others	3	0.8
Total	**384**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

From the above table, 26.3% indicated a reduction in the production of farm produce, 11.7% indicated a reduction in farmers' access to loans from commercial and microfinance banks as a result of the forced shutdown, 12.5% indicated a loss of perishable farm produce as buyers from outside could not access the farmer, 10.7% indicated the destruction of farm produce markets, and 21.3% indicated the destruction of farmlands alongside cultivated plants. 5.5% indicated the destruction of agricultural extension facilities and programs. 11.2% destruction of storage facilities (e.g., rhombuses, barns, warehouses, etc.), while 0.8% identify other effects such as the destruction of light facilities that help in the storage of perishable farm produce (vegetables, fruits, etc.). Thus, it could be seen from the result that the majority of the respondents revealed that a reduction in farm produce is the major effect of ethno-religious violence on farming activities in Jos Plateau State.

Findings from the key informant interview added flare to the effect of ethno-religious violence on farming activities in Jos Plateau State. One of the interviewees, who is 48 years old, expressed that:

Once there is a crisis, all the road connecting our people with the market in town (terminus market) is rendered inaccessible. This has repeatedly resulted in the high loss of our farm produce as buyers from outside are not able to come to the community to buy and our people are also unable to transport their farm produce to the market. Last month there was an attack on some farmers by Fulani herders. One person was killed while two people were seriously injured. Because we didn't know when this person would attack us, we abandoned far distant farmlands. This reduces our crop production capacity. In some families, the crop gotten for the entire year is not enough to feed the family talk more about taking some to the market (KII/12/6/2023/Traditional Ruler, Jos East).

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by effect of ethno-religious violence on farmers in Jos, Plateau States

Effect	Frequency	Percentage
Farmers are forcefully displaced due to large-scale destruction of their houses	106	27.6
Farmers lose their lives and means of livelihood as a result of ethno-religious violence	115	29.9
Contribute to poverty and hunger among farmers	89	23.2
The inability of farmers to access their farmland leads to damages of farm produce	71	18.5
Others	3	0.8
Total	**384**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

From the above table, 27.6% indicated that farmers are forcefully displaced due to large-scale destruction of their houses; 29.9% indicated farmers' loss of life and means of livelihood as a result of ethno-religious violence; 23.2% indicated it contributes to poverty and hunger among farmers; 18.5% indicated the inability of farmers to access their farmland, leading to damage to farm produce; and 0.8% identified other effects. From the above result, a significant percentage of the sample respondents revealed that farmers' lives and means of livelihood were lost as a result of ethno-religious violence in Jos.

Findings from the key informant interview added flare to the effect of ethno-religious violence on farmers in Jos Plateau State. One of the interviewees, who is 51 years old, expressed that:

> *We don't visit our farms once there is a problem like this particular one we are talking about because our enemies will use the opportunity to attack us. During the last crisis, many of our people were killed while working on their farms, some were killed on their way back. Let me tell you, there are a large number of farmers who are forcefully displaced due to the large-scale destruction of their farms by Fulani herdsmen. With the displacement, farming activities are very low here while in other places is not taking place at all as some of the farmers are in camps while many others decided to run away completely* (KII/3/6/2023/Traditional ruler, Jos South).

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study further revealed that ethno-religious violence affects farming activities in Jos Plateau State. Farming activities in Jos often suffer as a result of ethno-religious violence. The respondents viewed rapid reduction in the production of farm produce, reduction in farmers' access to loans from commercial and microfinance banks as a result of the forceful shutdown, loss of perishable farm produce as buyers from outside cannot access the farmer, destruction of farm produce markets, destruction of farmlands alongside cultivated plants, and destruction of storage facilities (e.g., rhombuses, barns, warehouses, etc.) as some of the effects of ethno-religious violence on farming activities in Jos Plateau State. Similarly, respondents revealed that farmers are forcefully displaced due to the large-scale destruction of their houses; they lose their lives and means of livelihood as a result of ethno-religious violence and the inability to access their farmland, leading to damages to farm produce, which subsequently contribute to poverty and hunger among farmers. This is consistent with the argument put forth by Effiong and Owolabi (2022), who claimed that a significant portion of farmers are forcibly relocated as a result of the widespread devastation of farmland along with its valuables, homes, marketplaces, and stores. Due to the displacement, farming is not being done because many farmers have chosen to relocate outside of their usual locations of residence or even outside of the state for safety reasons. Some farmers are living in camps. Farmers who experience violent conflicts suffer psychologically, mentally, emotionally, and physically, which hurts their capacity to plan and make wise decisions about their farms and management.

Recommendations

i. Farming activities in Jos Plateau State are severely disrupted by ethno-religious conflict, which results in decreased agricultural production, farmer displacement,

and the destruction of vital infrastructure such as farms, marketplaces, and storage facilities. Enhancing rural security and encouraging community-based conflict resolution techniques are essential to tackling these issues. The government should also create emergency response plans to provide temporary housing and other forms of aid to farmers who have been displaced.

ii. Rebuilding agricultural infrastructure, offering financial support, and assisting displaced farmers with resettlement programs and access to alternate farmlands should be the main goals of rehabilitation operations. Programs for community healing and mental health services are crucial to assisting impacted farmers in their emotional and mental recovery so they may once again properly plan and run their farms.

iii. Promoting agricultural diversification, implementing contemporary farming technologies, and creating alternate routes for market access are examples of long-term policies that can protect against disruptions. Assessment of the effects of violence on agriculture and the durability of solutions will be facilitated by monitoring systems and cooperative relationships with NGOs and academic institutions. These initiatives seek to improve food security, revive agricultural activity, and promote harmonious regional coexistence.

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