



Vol. 17, No. 1, 2022

DOI: 10.2478/jgp-2022-0006

Sidiqat Aderinoye-Abdulwahab

University of Ilorin (Nigeria)

Nsikak Udoh Nsima

University of Ilorin (Nigeria)

Johnson Abidemi Adebayo

University of Kwazulu-Natal (South Africa)

Lawal Lateef Adefalu

University of Ilorin (Nigeria)

Self-Defense during Communal Clashes: The Case of Pastoralists' Women in Kwara State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT. Women happen to be one of the most vulnerable groups to suffer losses of life and property during communal conflicts. In the midst of the high rate of incidence of communal clashes reported to involve pastoralist/nomads in Nigeria, it is important to investigate how the pastoralists' women manage to defend themselves. This study, therefore, examined the self-defense and escaping approaches of the pastoralists' women during communal clashes involving their husbands. Simple random sampling was used to select 120 respondents in Kwara State. Data were collected using questionnaire and analyzed using percentages. Findings showed that most (96.7%) of the women have witnessed communal clashes and 90% further agreed that women are targets of attack during clashes, however, the majority (79.2%) of the women did not join nor aided their husbands in communal clashes. Regarding pastoralists' women's approaches to defending themselves during clashes, 62.5% run away, 20% beg for mercy, and 17.5% fight back. Efforts should be made to engage both pastoral and host communities to embrace dialogue in resolving issues before it escalates into violent communal clashes.

KEYWORDS: vulnerability, violence, conflicts, women, host communities

Introduction

The Nigerian nation has persistently been in a fierce and seemingly perpetual state of war; where several lives have been lost as a result of violent

movements which have characterized the state. Of great significance is the high and persistent record of conflicts between pastoralists and farmers or with their host communities. A number of publications present climate and environmental factors as major triggers of conflicts among pastoralist communities (Babagana et al., 2019; Abugu et al., 2021). Studies have also argued that climate and environmental factors account for the worsening incidence of conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in northern Nigeria (Elisha, 2017; Ibrahim, Huseyin & Behiye, 2020). The subtle nature of climate change usually blurs its paroxysm to the extent that it is not usually seen as a major security threat. It would be observed that climate change, as a concept in itself, does not reflect threats to national security, but the impact and gradual dynamics of manifestation translate into dire consequences on livelihoods, social order, peace and stability. Nonetheless, it is widely accepted that environmental factors exacerbate conflict (Ducrotoy et al., 2018).

Farmers and pastoralists in many localities and different countries make their livelihood within the same geographical, political, and socio-cultural conditions which may be characterized by resource scarcity or political inequality. Farmer-pastoralist conflicts have been associated with the conflict of land resource use exacerbated by dwindling resources and such conflicts and communal clashes are becoming fiercer and increasingly widespread in Nigeria (Babagana et al., 2019). It is important to note that these conflicts have a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of those involved; of which pastoralist women are not exempted. These conflicts reinforce circles of extreme poverty and hunger, and destroy social status, food security and affect mostly the most marginalized groups including women and children. Consequently, it unleashes untold obstacles to children's education, thereby resulting in under-development and mass displacement.

Pastoralism presents opportunities and threat to livelihoods at household level because of the nomadic movements of men. Therefore, pastoralist women's livelihoods are often subjected to intensifying economic pressure in conflict situations. In addition, women are often primarily responsible for maintaining household livelihoods as a result of the enormous impact of communal clashes. Thus, women from poor and less developed countries are those who usually pay the price of unequal access to natural and economic resources. As a result of the unfortunate altercations between pastoralists in their host and neighboring communities; wives of pastoralist are left to self-defense as well as their children. According to Hollander (2016), self-defense is an act and skill displayed by potential victims (usually wom-

en) to fend off attackers. It is as a result of these prevailing problems that this study aims at assessing the level of vulnerability to the effect of communal clashes on pastoralist women. Thus, going by the challenges confronted by pastoralist' women, it is paramount to assess the vulnerability of wives and daughters of pastoralists to the effect of communal clashes.

The main objective of this study was to examine the Self-defense approaches of pastoralists' women during communal clashes involving their husbands in Kwara State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to: (i) describe the economic activity of the pastoralists' women, (ii) describe the experience of pastoralists' women during communal clashes, and (iii) investigate the self-defense approaches employed by pastoralists' women during communal clashes in Kwara State.

1. Methodology

The study was carried out in Kwara State, North Central Nigeria. A three-stage sampling procedure was used to select respondents. The first stage involved a purposive selection of two ADP Zones (B and D) from the four zones (A, B, C, and D). The selection of these zones was based on the high prevalence of pastoralists in Kwara State. The two zones have seven Local Government Areas (LGAs) in total (Zone B: Edu and Patigi; Zone D: Oke-Ero, Isin, Ifelodun, Ekiti, Irepodun, Offa and Oyun). Second stage involved a random selection of 3 LGAs in the selected zones. The selected LGAs were Patigi, Edu and Oke-Ero. Finally, the third stage was the random selection of 50% of the total 240 registered pastoralists in the three LGAs selected, to give a total of 120 pastoralists. One woman (wife) of each of the selected pastoralists served as respondent for the study. The decision for the percentage sampled from the population was to attain a sizeable number of pastoralist women from the zones. Data was collected with the use of an interview schedule. Data collected were analyzed using frequency distribution, percentages, mean, and ranking.

2. Results And Discussion

2.1. Economic Activity of the Pastoralists' Women

Results presented in Table 1 showed that the main economic activities of the pastoralists' women (61.7%) were trading, cheese making and trad-

ing. This finding corroborates Okeke et al. (2016) that Fulani herders still dominate the dairy sub-sector in Nigeria. Komolafe et al. (2019) further stated that Fulani men mostly do production through hand milking while their women often engage in the processing through value addition into different products and the marketing. Table 1 further showed that the pastoralists' women's resources for economic activities were primarily from husbands (51.7%) while appreciable percentage (34.1%) sourced for resources by themselves. This finding implies that being married is a favourable factor for accessing economic resources among the pastoralists' women (Table 1). It was also observed that the women combined multiple economic activities rather than focusing on only one type. This is also an indication that the women made a conscientious effort at self-reliance. Apparently, farming or any other singular economic activity is no longer popular among the pastoralists' women.

Table 1. Economic activity of the pastoralists' women

Type of economic activity involved in:	Percentage (120)
Trading only	3.3
Cheese hawking only	13.3
Making cheese only	14.2
Trading, cheese making and trading	61.7
Harvesting only	1.7
Farming only	5.8
Source of resources for economic activities:	
Village head	4.2
Government	0
Self	34.1
Husband	61.7

Source: Field survey, 2019

2.2. Experience of Communal Clashes among Pastoralists' Women

As indicated in Table 2, most (96.7%) of the women have witnessed communal clashes involving their husbands. During the clashes witnessed, 90% of the women claimed they were, often times, the target of the communal attacks because some of the attacks happen when their husbands have gone grazing with the herds and are therefore not around to defend them. This suggests that women and children of nomads are soft targets of the attacks. This corroborates the argument that communal clashes have gender-differentiated impacts as women, by virtue of certain specific

gender roles, experience them in different ways (Amnesty International, 2018). Further responses showed that 97.5% of the women agreed that they were personally affected during communal clashes as the survey also indicated that women complained of sustaining injuries during communal clashes. As a result of the crises, 88.3% claimed they end up protecting themselves. Table 2 highlights the experience of the women as well as the perspectives of pastoralists' women towards communal clashes.

Table 2. Experience of communal clashes among pastoralists' women

Variable	Percentage (120)
Witnessed communal clashes:	
No	3.3
Yes	96.7
Women are targets of attack during clashes:	
No	10.0
Yes	90.0
Personally affected during clashes:	
No	2.5
Yes	97.5
Protects self during clashes	
No	11.7
Yes	88.3

Source: Field survey, 2019

2.3. Self-Defense Approach of Pastoralists' Women

As shown in Table 3, the majority (62.5%) of the women indicated a run-away approach while 20% beg for mercy to protect self from danger of being attacked by their husbands' opponents. This is a mark of powerlessness, and it is not entirely strange to find that women towed this path of self-defense. This suggests the extent to which communal clashes expose the women to dangers; thus indicating from the field survey, that women are victims of conflicts. This further supports the report of Abroulaye et al. (2015) who alluded to the fact that women may experience multiple blows as communal clashes tend to impact women in diverse ways. One is the inability to be able to cater for the children when husbands' have relocated with the herds while another is the inability to defend themselves during clashes. There is also the aspect of lack of emotional support that prevails the women when their husbands are absent for long periods during scarcity of pasture which makes men to relocate with the cattle. These are in-

dicators of high level of vulnerability of pastoralists women, especially in the study area. Indeed, it becomes pertinent to find measures to reduce women's vulnerability during communal clashes.

Another notable approach for protection indicated among a few (17.5%) of the women was to fight back and join their husbands in fighting opponents. This is the low percentage level of bravery and participation of pastoralists' women as combatants in the communal clashes involving their husbands. This is also not surprising as Krause (2019) emphasized that some women support the fighting because they benefit from it. They may get some goods, clothing and money from the looting. However, Krause also noted that participation of women in fighting was often downplayed while the notion of women as victims and peaceful mothers prevailed.

Table 3. Self-defense approach of pastoralists' women during communal clashes

How do you defend self during clashes?	Percentage (120)
Begs for mercy	20.0
Run away	62.5
Fight back and joins husband in fighting opponents	17.5

Source: Field survey, 2019

Conclusion and Recommendations

It can be concluded from this study that pastoralists' women are often the target of the communal attacks involving their husbands and so, the pastoralists' women employed several approaches to defend self because of their high vulnerability to the effect of communal clashes in Kwara State. The commonly used approach by the pastoralists' women is the run-away approach. This study therefore recommends that adequate measures must be taken by concerned stakeholders such as husbands of pastoralists women and community leaders; to forestall recurrent communal clashes involving the pastoralists, so as to ease women and children from the untold hardship they often experience as a result of the clashes. To further mitigate these crises and its impact on the women, there is an urgent need for sensitization on the need to shun soft targets such as avoiding the attacks on women and children during crises; as well as the necessity of embracing peaceful dialogues to prevent women and children from falling into severe economic hardships and social unrest.

REFERENCES

- ABROULAYE, S. et al. (2015) Climate Change: A driver of crop farmers-Agropastoralists conflict in Burkina Faso. *International Journal of Applied Science and Technology*. 5 (3). Pp. 92–104.
- ABUGU N. A. et al. (2021) Reviewing the Links Between Climate Change and Resource Conflict. *Global Journal of Pure and Applied Sciences*. Vol. 27. Pp. 243–152. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gjpas.v27i2.16>.
- AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (2018) *Harvest of Death: Three Years of Bloody Clashes between Farmers and Herders in Nigeria*. [Online] Available at: [amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF](https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF) [Accessed: 15 March 2021].
- BABAGANA, M. et al. (2019) Pastoralists – Farmers' Conflicts in Jigawa State Nigeria: Causes, Repercussions and Solutions. *International Journal of Contemporary Research and Review*. 10 (06). Pp. 20339–20354. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15520/ijcrr.v10i06.707>.
- DUCROTOY, M. J. et al. (2018) Patterns of passage into protected areas: Drivers and outcomes of Fulani immigration, settlement and integration into the Kachia Grazing Reserve, Northwest Nigeria. *Pastoralism*. 8 (1). Pp. 1–16.
- ELISHA, I., (2017) Evidence of climate change and adaptation strategies among grain farmers in Sokoto State, Nigeria. *IOSR. Journal of Environmental Science, Toxicology and Food Technology (IOSR-JESTFT)*. 11 (3). Pp. 1–7.
- HOLLANDER, J. A. (2016) The importance of self-defense training for sexual violence prevention. *Feminism & Psychology*. 26 (2). Pp. 207–226. DOI: 10.1177/09593535166637393.
- IBRAHIM, S. S. et al. (2021) Rural Migration and Relative Deprivation in Agro-Pastoral Communities Under the Threat of Cattle Rustling in Nigeria. *SAGE Open*. Pp. 1–11. DOI: 10.1177/2158244020988856.
- IBRAHIM, S. S., HUSEYIN, O. & BEHIYE, C. (2020) Testing the impact of environmental hazards and violent conflicts on sustainable pastoral development: Micro-level evidence from Nigeria. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*. 22. Pp. 4169–4190.
- KOMOLAFE, S. E. et al. (2019) Value Addition Initiatives of Women in Processing Dairy Products in Kwara State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Agricultural Science, Research and Technology in Extension and Education Systems*. 9 (3). Pp. 141–148.
- KRAUSE, J. (2019) Gender Dimensions of (Non)Violence in Communal Conflict: The Case of Jos, Nigeria. *Comparative Political Studies*. 52 (10). Pp. 1466–1499. DOI:10.1177/0010414019830722.
- OKEKE, K. S. et al. (2016) Microbiological Survey and Appraisal of Local Milk Production in Kwara and Niger State, Nigeria. *Global Journal of Biology, Agriculture and health Sciences*. 5 (2). Pp. 139–153.