



Herdsman Menace and Agricultural Activities in Ekiti State, Nigeria

Igbekoyi K. E¹, Gbadamosi S. G², Ilori S. O³, Agboola E. B⁴, Azeez A. O⁵, Kayode J. O⁶, Ijabadeniyi O. A⁷

^{1, 3, 4, 5}Department of Peace and Security Studies, Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science, and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State

²Department of Sociology, Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State

⁶Department of Psychology, Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State

⁷Department of Sociology, Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State

Corresponding Author: Igbekoyi K. E igbekoyi.emmanuel@bouesti.edu.ng

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ABSTRACT

Herdsman menace is no doubt a worrisome issue that has threatened the live and existence of humans in the society including the area of food security in Nigeria. The study aims at investigating the prevalence and implication of herdsman menace on agricultural activities in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive method in which quantitative approach is employed. The study used multistage sampling techniques to select 286 respondents across the senatorial districts in Ekiti State, and copies of questionnaire was used to gather information on the subject matter from respondents. The study revealed that 37% majority were youth, 68% were male, 35% were married, and 34% respondents were farmers. Also, the study revealed that 64% were aware of herdsman menace, and this is because it was on monthly basis (37%), and 72% claimed it is prevalent. According to the study's findings, the majority of respondents agreed that herdsman pose a threat to agricultural production. These consequences include: preventing economic livelihood (75%), reducing agricultural product availability (63%), causing violence or aggression (50%), causing damage to infrastructure (57%), and displacing people (47%). Based on the results, the study came to the conclusion that food insecurity in Ekiti State, and consequently throughout Nigeria, was exacerbated by the threat posed by herdsman. As a result of the findings and conclusion, the study advises that government and security services should ensure they provide security and safety for farmers in order to continue their agricultural activities and increase food security in the State, and Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Globally, food insecurity was put at around 30%, Africa at 61%, and West Africa around 66%. This shows that the prevalence of food insecurity is the highest in Central Africa with 78%, Eastern Africa with 69%, and West Africa with 66%. The implication is that food insecurity in Africa and in the West African which include Nigeria, is high and more than twice the prevalence at the global level as stated by Food and Agriculture Organization (2023). Nations are confronted with an unprecedented food crisis which are as a result of conflict especially in some African nations. In African, 20% or about 282 million people are undernourished, which is an increased compared to the 57 million people recorded at the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic. However, this has resulted to more than a billion people who are unable to afford a healthy food, with malnourished children amounting to 30% (Mutuwa, et al. 2023). Food insecurity is intensifying across Africa thereby, driving millions of people into a serious risk of hunger and starvation caused by several factors such as herdsman menace and conflict in some part of Nigeria. In Central and West Africa, according to Omer (2024), it was projected that about 46% millions of people may experience hunger by August 2024 due to conflicts such as herdsman menace, and high prices which are significant factors for food insecurity, especially in Nigeria. In Nigeria context, conflict such as the herdsman menace has displaced 2.2 million people and also left 4.4 million people food insecure. This however, has had a negative impact on the agricultural production and increased the level of food insecurity especially in the rural areas (World Food Programme, 2024). It is based on this that the study intends to investigate the prevalence and implications of herdsman menace on agricultural activities in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies has reported how conflict as caused food insecurity in several African nations. It is necessary to state that violent conflict posed serious threat to food security in Sub-Saharan Africa. For example, the 2023 Global Report on Food Crisis suggested that conflict pushes 117 million person into serious food insecurity, followed by economic depression (84 million), and weather extremes (56 million) as stated Zeith (2023). Also, result from Muriuki et al. (2023) shows that conflict decrease food consumption by 6.84 units. The Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2023) averred that an estimated 82% amounting to 149 million Africans are facing food insecurity in a conflict affected nations. In the case of Ekiti State, it was reported that herdsman feed their cattle and destroyed farm produces such as cassava and yam in Ado-Ekiti and Igede-Ekiti (Nejo, 2024). Reports from UNICEF (2023) shows that about 25 million person are impacted by high food insecurity in Nigeria, and as a result, Nigeria is ranked second from the 59 listed nations, apart from Democratic Republic of Congo which is ranked first with about 26 million people who have expressed food insecurity. According to Sasu (2024), 21% Nigerians experienced hunger between 2020 and 2022, in which the population of people who has suffered food insecurity increased to about 70% between 2019-2022. Herdsman menace in Nigeria has a vast implication on farmers especially the poorest

farmers who are the hardest hit. Having to bear with herdsmen menace has resulted to food shortage and therefore, push up food prices as stated by Oyedeji (2024). Because there is no grounded empirical study on the subject matter, makes this study germane and relevant.

METHODOLOGY

1. **Research Design:** The study used a descriptive design and a quantitative approach to gather data on the topic from a representative sample of the intended audience. Consequently, a total of 286 respondents were chosen from various senatorial districts in Ekiti State.
2. **Study Area:** Ekiti State: This state is situated in Nigeria's southwest. It is mostly an agrarian state with a significant population of students and civil and public personnel. The majority of the population in the state speaks Yoruba, but there are also Igbo, Hausa, Ebira, and other tribes. The State is therefore characterized by a diversity of cultures, customs, and behaviors.
3. **Study Population and Sampling Technique:** The study population comprises of the general populace in Ekiti and multistage sampling techniques was used to select two hundred and eighty-six (286) respondents across the three senatorial districts in the State. The first stage adopted purposive sampling in selecting the three senatorial districts namely; Ekiti Central, Ekiti North, and Ekiti South. The second stage employed simple random sampling in selecting two Local Government Areas in each senatorial district. The last stage was quota sampling in which 50 questionnaire is allocated to all LGAs. However, the study was able to retrieve two hundred and eighty-six (286), instead of three hundred (300) questionnaires
4. **Data Collection and Analysis:** Questionnaires was used to collect data from respondents and was also analyzed using SPSS, and presented in frequency percentage

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Respondents' Percentage Distribution by Sociodemographic Factors

Variables	Ekiti Central (N=96)	Ekiti North (N=98)	Ekiti South (N=92)	Total (N=286)
Age				
20-30	34 (35.0)	40 (41.0)	32 (35.0)	106 (37.0)
31-40	28 (29.0)	31 (31.0)	25 (27.0)	84 (29.0)
41-50	20 (21.0)	15 (15.0)	18 (20.0)	53 (18.0)
51 and above	14 (15.0)	12 (13.0)	17 (18.0)	43 (16.0)
Sex				
Male	60 (62.0)	64 (65.0)	71 (77.0)	195 (68.0)
Female	36 (38.0)	34 (35.0)	21 (22.0)	91 (32.0)
Marital Status				
Single	21 (22.0)	28 (29.0)	25 (27.0)	74 (26.0)
Married	39 (41.0)	34 (35.0)	26 (28.0)	99 (35.0)
Divorce	16 (16.0)	11 (10.0)	18 (20.0)	45 (16.0)
Separated	8 (8.0)	15 (15.0)	10 (11.0)	33 (12.0)

Widow	12 (13.0)	10 (10.0)	13 (14.0)	35 (12.0)
Educational Background				
No Formal Education	28 (29.0)	23 (24.0)	20 (22.0)	71 (25.0)
Primary Education	11 (11.0)	27 (28.0)	16 (17.0)	54 (19.0)
Secondary Education	18 (19.0)	15 (15.0)	22 (24.0)	55 (19.0)
Post-Secondary Education	39 (61.0)	33 (34.0)	34 (37.0)	106 (37.0)
Occupation				
Students	25 (26.0)	23 (24.0)	21 (23.0)	69 (24.0)
Civil Servant	18 (19.0)	20 (20.0)	15 (16.0)	53 (19.0)
Traders/ Artisan	20 (21.0)	24 (25.0)	22 (24.0)	66 (23.0)
Farmers	33 (34.0)	31 (32.0)	34 (37.0)	98 (34.0)
Ethnic group				
Hausa	12 (13.0)	18 (18.0)	20 (22.0)	50 (17.0)
Igbo	8 (8.0)	-	-	8 (3.0)
Yoruba	44 (46.0)	55 (56.0)	50 (54.0)	149 (52.0)
Others	32 (33.0)	25 (26.0)	22 (24.0)	79 (28.0)
Religion				
Traditional	7 (8.0)	11 (10.0)	10 (11.0)	28 (10.0)
Christian	56 (58.0)	51 (52.0)	42 (46.0)	149 (52.0)
Islam	33 (34.0)	36 (38.)	40 (43.0)	109 (38.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The distribution of respondents by age is seen in Table 1. According to table (1), 37% of respondents were in the 20–30 age range, 29% were in the 31–40 age range, 18% were in the 41–50 age range, and 16% were 51 years of age or above. Nonetheless, the findings indicate that adolescents made up the majority (37%) of the study's respondents. This further suggests that the majority of study participants were young, economically engaged individuals. Additionally, the study's sex discrepancy is shown in Table (1). From the table, two-third of the respondents were male while the female respondents comprise roughly one-third (32%). The findings, however, indicate that more men than women were interviewed for this study. Furthermore, the findings show that both men and women in the chosen research area were aware of the threat posed by herders in both their local communities and the entire state.

In addition, Table (1) provided information on respondents' marital status, revealing that 35% of respondents were married, 26% were single, 16% were divorced, and 12% were separated or widowed. What this means is that married folks participated more than other marital status in the study. Additionally, table 1 displays the respondents' educational backgrounds. 37% of the respondents had post-secondary qualifications, such as NCE, OND, HND, B.Sc., M.Sc., and PhD, according to the report, while 25% had no formal education and 19% had only primary and secondary certificates. This indicates that the vast majority of those surveyed possess post-secondary education. The occupations of the respondents were further discussed in Table 1. The report did note, however, that 19% of the respondents were civil servants, 24% were students, 23% were traders or artisans, and 34% were farmers. As a result, this report implies that a large number of farmers participated in the study. This is

because farmers, particularly those in Ekiti North and Ekiti South, actively participated in the study because they were aware of the threat posed by herdsmen in the state and, consequently, throughout Nigeria.

Table 1 presents the respondent's distribution by ethnic groups. It shows that 52% of the respondents were Yorubas, 28% of the respondents claimed to be from other ethnic groups and they include the people of Ebira and Idoma from Kogi and Ebonyi States respectively. Additionally, 3% of respondents identified as Igbo, while 17% of respondents identified as Hausas. Because the study area is primarily Yoruba speaking, with Ebira and Idoma settlers who are more involved in farming in the State, the results indicate that the majority of respondents covered by the study were members of the Yoruba, Ebira, and Idoma ethnic groups. The respondents' religious affiliation is also displayed in Table (1). It is evident that the vast majority of respondents (52%) identified as Christians, followed by Muslims (38%), and traditionalists (10%). When compared to other religions, it is evident that Christians make up a larger percentage of the overall respondents the survey collected.

Table 2. The Respondents' Percentage Distribution Regarding the Frequency of Herdsmen's Activities in Ekiti State

Options	Ekiti Central	Ekiti North	Ekiti South	Total
Awareness	N=96(%)	N=98(%)	N=92(%)	N=286(%)
Yes	62(65.0)	58(59.0)	64(70.0)	184(64.0)
No	34(35.0)	40(41.0)	28(30.0)	102(36.0)
Frequency Reported Cases				
Daily	16(17.0)	20(20.0)	12(13.0)	48(17.0)
Weekly	28(29.0)	25(26.0)	28(30.0)	81(28.0)
Monthly	39(41.0)	37(38.0)	31(34.0)	107(37.0)
Yearly	13(14.0)	16(16.0)	21(23.0)	50(18.0)
Prevalence of Herdsmen Activities				
Prevalence	70(73.0)	74(76.0)	62(67.0)	206(72.0)
Not Prevalence	26(27.0)	24(25.0)	30(33.0)	80(28.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows the state's awareness of the threat posed by herdsmen. However, the security agencies are not included in these responses. Because of this, a significant number of respondents stated that they were aware of the threat posed by the herdsmen in the state, whilst 36% of respondents said they were unaware. As a result, most respondents are aware of the threat posed by herdsmen in Ekiti State. This suggests that there is a threat from herdsmen in the state. Table 2 also provided an explanation of the state's reported herders activity frequency. The plurality, 37%, attested to the herder's threat, indicating that it was recorded on a monthly basis. On the other hand, 28% of respondents stated on a weekly basis, 18% on an annual basis, and 17% on a daily basis. The statistics suggest that herdsmen threats occur frequently, as they are reported to occur once a month. In other words, the State experiences a herdsmen threat every month. Nonetheless, the findings supported the knowledge of the threat posed by herders in Ekiti State and, consequently, throughout Nigeria. The frequency of the herdsmen threat was indicated in Table 2 above. In contrast to 28% of respondents who stated that the herdsmen threat is not widespread in

the state, Table (2) demonstrates that a resounding majority of respondents affirmed that it is. throughout other words, 72% of respondents, or the majority, think that the threat posed by herdsmen is widespread throughout the state. Nonetheless, this result was supported by Table 2, which confirms that the threat posed by herdsmen occurs monthly and is also widespread throughout the state.

Table 3. Respondents' Percentage Distribution on the Effects of the Herdsmen Threat on Ekiti State's Agricultural Products

Variables	Ekiti Central (N=96)	Ekiti North (N=98)	Ekiti South (N=92)	Total (N=286)
Obstruction of Economic Livelihood	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
Strongly Agree	23 (24.0)	20 (20.0)	18 (20.0)	61 (21.0)
Agree	49 (51.0)	52 (53.0)	54 (59.0)	155 (54.0)
Undecided	-	-	-	-
Disagree	24 (25.0)	14 (14.0)	10 (11.0)	48 (17.0)
Strongly Disagree	-	12 (12.0)	10 (11.0)	22 (8.0)
Scarcity of Agricultural Products				
Strongly Agree	20 (21.0)	25 (26.0)	23 (25.0)	68 (24.0)
Agree	32 (33.0)	44 (45.0)	36 (39.0)	112 (39.0)
Undecided	10 (10.0)	-	5 (5.0)	15 (5.0)
Disagree	23 (24.0)	22 (22.0)	18 (20.0)	63 (22.0)
Strongly Disagree	11 (11.0)	7 (7.0)	10 (11.0)	28 (10.0)
Aggression, Frustration and Violence				
Strongly Agree	10 (10.0)	20 (20.0)	23 (25.0)	53 (19.0)
Agree	30 (31.0)	32 (33.0)	28 (30.0)	90 (31.0)
Undecided	13 (14.0)	10 (10.0)	-	23 (8.0)
Disagree	33 (34.0)	24 (25.0)	21 (23.0)	78 (27.0)
Strongly Disagree	20 (21.0)	12 (12.0)	20 (22.0)	52 (18.0)
Infrastructural Damages				
Strongly Agree	21 (22.0)	18 (18.0)	20 (22.0)	59 (21.0)
Agree	34 (35.0)	29 (30.0)	41 (45.0)	104 (36.0)
Undecided	6 (6.0)	14 (14.0)	-	20 (7.0)
Disagree	24 (25.0)	20 (20.0)	18 (20.0)	62 (22.0)
Strongly Disagree	11 (11.0)	17 (17.0)	13 (14.0)	41 (14.0)
Displacement of Person				
Strongly Agree	18 (19.0)	16 (16.0)	21 (23.0)	55 (19.0)
Agree	33 (34.0)	24 (25.0)	22 (24.0)	79 (28.0)
Undecided	12 (13.0)	15 (15.0)	10 (11.0)	37 (13.0)
Disagree	23 (24.0)	28 (29.0)	20 (22.0)	71 (25.0)
Strongly Disagree	10 (10.0)	15 (15.0)	16 (17.0)	41 (14.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The impact of herdsmen's actions on the state's agriculture was described in Table 3. According to Table (3), 25% of respondents were not persuaded that herdsmen's actions in the state could hinder people's ability to make a living, while a significant majority of respondents thought that such activities have impeded economic activity. This suggests that the activities of herdsmen jeopardize the people's ability to make a living. Because of this, Table (3) went on to explain that a majority of respondents agreed that herdsmen's activities lead to a shortage of agricultural products, whereas 32% disagreed and 5% were unsure. This suggests that the state experiences a shortage of agricultural

products as a result of herdsmen's activity. Additionally, Table 3 showed that half of all respondents concurred that herdsmen's actions cause hostility, annoyance, and violence amongst both herders and the general public. This is due to the fact that 31% and 19% of respondents, respectively, agreed and strongly agreed. Nonetheless, 8% were unsure, 27% disagreed, and 18% strongly disagreed. In other words, the majority of respondents said the herdsmen's actions caused the state's citizens to become irate, hostile, and violent.

However, according to Table (3), 22% of respondents disagreed, 14% strongly disagreed, and 7% were indecisive, whereas 36% agreed and 21% strongly agreed. As a result, almost 50% of all respondents agreed that herdsmen's activities cause damage to infrastructure. This is not implausible, though, as it was shown to cause violence, annoyance, and aggressiveness, all of which can result in damage to infrastructure. Lastly, Table (3) reveals that 47% of all respondents attest to the idea that herdsmen's activities cause people to be displaced from their communities within the state. This is because 39% disputed that it could lead to human displacement, whereas 28% and 19% agreed and strongly agreed. These individuals, however, felt that they were unable to leave their father's farm. However, 13% of those surveyed were unsure. This research suggests that herdsmen's actions may cause people to be uprooted from their homes.

The study's conclusions indicate that adolescents made up the majority (37%) of the respondents that were surveyed. This further suggests that the majority of study participants were young, economically engaged individuals. This is in line with United Nations (2022) which stated that 149 million children faced the worst food insecurity globally driven by conflict. The findings also showed that there was a gender gap among the respondents, with roughly one-third (32%), of the respondents being female and two-thirds being male. To put it another way, data demonstrates that more males than women participated in this survey and were aware of the threat posed by herdsmen both locally and throughout the state. This finding is somehow contradicting the findings of Ashagidigbi et al (2017), which reported that female with 59% who headed their household expressed food insecurity, and almost 35% of them aged 60 years and above.

This is because female is often directly or indirectly affected with herdsmen menace, and the suffering they experience can have negative implications on their social and peaceful co-existence. Emerald and Nwafor (2024) supported this by stating that the main livelihood activities of females were farming, processing and sales of farm produce. The fact that married people participated in the survey at higher rates than people in other marital statuses is another telling finding. The study's findings indicate that the vast majority of participants possess post-secondary qualifications. There are a lot of farmers in the study, which is another telling finding. Because they are aware of the threat posed by herdsmen in the state, farmers, particularly those in Ekiti North and Ekiti South, actively participated in the study. Because the study area is primarily Yoruba speaking, with Ebira and Idoma settlers who are more

involved in farming in the State, the study found that the majority of respondents covered by the survey were members of the Yoruba, Ebira, and Idoma ethnic groups. When compared to other religions, the study's findings also indicate that Christians make up a larger percentage of all respondents.

The study's conclusions showed that a sizable percentage of participants (64%) acknowledged that they were aware of the herdsmen threat in Ekiti State. This indicates that the threat is present throughout the State and, consequently, throughout Nigeria. This is not far-fetched as several cases of herdsmen menace have been reported in the State, especially in Ikole where they destroy and burn plantations and houses (Nathaniel et al. 2022). This finding corroborates the assertion of Abodunrin et al. (2024) that herdsmen menace in Nigeria at large has posed a significant challenge to food production, as a result of disruption in farm production, crop losses and economic hardship for farmers. The majority of respondents (37%), according to the findings, attested to the monthly reports of the herdsmen problem. According to the insinuation, the State is plagued by herdsmen every month.

According to the survey, 72% of participants think that the threat posed by herdsmen is widespread in the state. As envisioned by Bella et al. (2024), the government undoubtedly used a multi-layered strategy to control farmer-herder disputes by establishing regional security to lessen the crisis due to the threat posed by herdsmen.

The study report that herdsmen activities endanger the economic livelihood of the people in Ekiti State, as a larger distribution (75%) of respondents affirmed to its implication. This result corroborates the findings of Dauda and Igbekoyi (2020) than 80% affirmed that herdsmen menace has implication on the economic livelihood of people in Benue State, and by extension, in Nigeria. This is to say that the implication of herdsmen menace can significantly affect the economic livelihood of farmers as it disrupts their agricultural activities. Nigeria is said to be one of the nations highly affected by conflict, that impacted the livelihood of people cum the fact that 48% of Nigerians live below the poverty line (Idisi, 2021)

Food security is necessary requirement for the survival of human, as it is inevitable for human existence. Further findings from the study revealed that about 63% of respondents affirmed that herdsmen activities lead to scarcity of agricultural product in the State. Conflicts results to scarcity of agricultural produce in several ways like; damage to crops or destruction of livestock, disruption of supply chains, closure of trade route. This is so because farmers will compel to reduce the area of land cultivation or abandoned the farm (Amare et al, 2024).

This finding supported the assertion that access to food has been affected by persistent crisis in North-East State, herdsmen menace and even kidnapping in some Northern and Southern States in Nigeria (UNICEF, 2023). Oladipo and Oyinloye (2022) stated that violence and food insecurity share a reverse causal relationship, using frustration-aggression hypothesis to map out how sudden change in the availability and access of basic food can results to violence.

Revealing from the study also shows that majority of the respondents believed that herdsmen activities lead to aggression, frustration and violence among the people of the State. Evidence according to (Okoro, 2018) shows that there was attack and counter attack from the herdsmen and farmers which also result to loss of lives, displacement, destruction of house, farmland and crops, which invariable lead to food insecurity.

Herdsmen menace has resulted to the destructions of critical infrastructure and displaced millions of people thereby destabilizing economic, health and educational systems in Nigeria. Also revealing from the study is that more than half (57%) of the total respondents affirmed that herdsmen activities create infrastructural damages. Poor or damaged infrastructure such as inability to access farm land during crisis, lack of protection, road and market infrastructure also contributes to food insecurity in Nigeria (Adama, et al. 2022). Herdsmen menace have caused millions of persons to be displaced in Nigeria. Report shows that more than 3 million people were living in internal displacement as a result of herdsmen menace in 2023 (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2023). The study revealed that herdsmen activities can result to displacement of person from their homes as 47% majority attested to the fact that it has displaced several persons from their areas. The study affirmed the statement of Osah and Ogu (2020) that herdsmen menace is a major factor for forced migration and displacement in Nigeria, as it has been on the increase in the last decade.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Herdsmen menace is no doubt a challenge to food security in any nations, as its perpetration has caused several negative impacts to the lives of people especially the poor farmers in the State. The situation has brought to the fore score of death and destruction of properties and living millions of people homeless. The study has shown that the implication of herdsmen menace on agricultural production has resulted food insecurity as many farmers were compelled to flee their farmland for safety, because agricultural activities would either ceased to exist or cannot flourish. However, based on the findings from this study, the study concluded that herdsmen menace has negative implication on agricultural production in the State, and which is also a major contributing factor to food insecurity. Therefore, the study recommends that government, relevant stakeholders including security agencies should ensure safety, protection for famers in order to access their farmland and boost food security for the State, and Nigeria.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations so further research is still needed on this topic.

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