

# Innovations

## Environmental Induced Violent Conflict and its Implications for Sustainable Development: A Case Study of Farmer-Herder Clashes in Ikole-Ekiti Local Government Area, Ekiti State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Environment-induced violent conflicts remain a significant challenge to sustainable development in Nigeria, particularly in agrarian communities where disputes between farmers and herders escalate into armed conflicts. This study investigates the impact of environment-induced violent conflict on sustainable development, focusing on the Fulani-Farmers conflict in Ikole-Ekiti Local Government Area, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The research examines the nature, causes, and effects of the conflict, with a view to proffering practical solutions to mitigate its impact on agriculture and local development. The study adopts a descriptive research design, employing a mixed-methods approach. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources, including structured questionnaires, interviews with farmers, herders, community leaders, and local government officials, as well as reviews of existing literature and government records. A stratified sampling technique was used to ensure representation across all parties involved in the conflict. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were employed to interpret the data. The study adopted Relative Deprivation Theory as the theoretical framework. The findings reveal that the parties involved in the conflict are predominantly local farmers and Fulani herders, whose livelihoods are intricately tied to land and water resources. The conflict arises from environmental factors such as resource scarcity, encroachment on farmlands, and climate change-induced migration, compounded by socio-economic issues like weak governance, lack of conflict resolution mechanisms, and ethnic tensions. The nature of previous conflicts in the area indicates a cyclical pattern of violence, marked by loss of lives, displacement of communities, and destruction of farmlands. The study highlights the adverse impacts of the conflict on agricultural productivity, food security, and the local economy, with long-term consequences for sustainable development in Ikole-Ekiti and beyond. To address the problem, the study recommends the establishment of community-based conflict resolution mechanisms, improved land-use policies, and government-led initiatives to provide alternative livelihoods for both farmers and herders. It also advocates for increased investment in environmental conservation and climate adaptation strategies to reduce resource-based tensions. This research emphasizes the urgent need for a multi-stakeholder approach involving government agencies, community leaders, civil society organizations, and international partners to foster sustainable development and peace in conflict-prone regions.*

**Keywords:** Environment, Violent, Conflict, Sustainable, Development

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## Introduction

Nigeria is one of the Third World Countries with the highest average increase in global war. Nigeria has experienced several internal wars in various regions of the nation as well as a significant civil war (known as the Biafra war) since gaining independence from Britain in 1960. Aliyu (2004) states that "disputes in Nigeria are of various kinds and have been rapidly growing since the 1967–1970 American Civil War. According to local authorities, this resulted in the expulsion of 700 pastoralists from the northeastern state of Borno in May 2009 and about 2,000 from the Plateau in April (IRIN, 2010). The nation's differing value systems and resource control are the primary causes of these conflicts. The term "conflict" generally refers to a situation in which one identifiable human group in a given environment (whether tribal, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, socioeconomic, or political, among others) is deliberately opposed to or more identifiable human groups because these groups are pursuing what appear to be incompatible goals, according to Dougherty and Pfalzgarff, Jr. (1981).

According to Homer-Dixon (1996), there are three primary factors that contribute to environmental scarcity and conflict: the depletion and degradation of renewable resources, the unequal distribution of these resources, and the increased consumption of these resources. He claims that there is a complicated link between environmental scarcity and conflict. In other words, a shortage of renewable resources can lead to large-scale, unstable population movements, civil unrest, heightened tensions between different racial, ethnic, and religious groups, and the collapse of political and social institutions. Religious, ethnic, and political differences, or a combination of these, are the main causes of conflict in Nigeria. On the other hand, labor-related issues like strikes and industrial actions—which can occasionally last for several months—are the reason behind other areas of lower conflict. Investigating the underlying causes and consequences of "conflict," which is occasionally justified as a typical aspect of human interaction, is therefore crucial. Is this, however, truly the norm in human interaction?

Environmental conflicts have become a significant issue in various regions of Nigeria, particularly in areas where natural resources are scarce or under pressure from human activities. The Fulani-farmers' conflict, which has plagued many parts of Nigeria, including Ikole-Ekiti in Ekiti State, is a prominent example. This conflict is primarily driven by competition over land and water resources, exacerbated by environmental degradation, population growth, and climate change (Blench, 2010). The arid conditions in northern Nigeria have prompted many Fulani herders to migrate southward in search of greener pastures for their livestock, leading to clashes with farming communities over land use (Nwankwo, 2018).

The conflict between Fulani herders and farmers in Ikole-Ekiti is a reflection of broader socio-economic and environmental challenges in Nigeria. These violent clashes often result in loss of lives, destruction of property, and displacement of

communities, significantly impacting local development (Adisa & Adekunle, 2010). Farmers rely on the land for their livelihood, while herders depend on the same land for grazing, leading to frequent disputes. The increasing pressure on these natural resources is often aggravated by weak land management policies and a lack of effective conflict resolution mechanisms (Ofem & Inyang, 2014).

Sustainable development, as defined by the United Nations, aims to balance economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability (United Nations, 2015). However, environmental-induced conflicts, such as the Fulani-farmers' conflict in Ikole-Ekiti, pose a threat to achieving these goals. The persistent clashes undermine agricultural productivity, displace communities, and strain local economies, thereby hindering the prospects for sustainable development in the region (Odoh & Chigozie, 2012). Efforts to resolve these conflicts require a multi-faceted approach, including improved resource management, effective land-use policies, and conflict mediation strategies. The role of local and national government agencies in addressing these challenges is critical. However, inadequate government intervention and weak law enforcement in areas like Ikole-Ekiti have allowed the conflict to escalate, posing a threat to peace and sustainable development in the region (Baba, 2013).

The case of Ikole-Ekiti is not isolated; it mirrors conflicts between herders and farmers across Nigeria. Understanding the root causes of the Fulani-farmers' conflict and exploring sustainable solutions is essential to mitigating future violence and promoting development in affected communities (McGregor, 2017). This study, therefore, seeks to assess the environmental factors driving this conflict and their implications for sustainable development in Ikole-Ekiti, Ekiti State. This study examines the connection between resource use and conflict, with a focus on conflict caused by the environment and sustainable development in Nigeria. With the following particular goals, the study focuses on the Fulani/farmer violent conflict in Ikole Local Government Areas, Ekiti State, Nigeria. Characteristics of the parties concerned (local farmers and Fulani herdsman). Nature of previous incidents of violent conflict, investigate the source(s) of the Fulani-farmers violent conflict in the research area, examine the effects of violent conflict on agricultural output and proffer recommendations for agriculture production that is sustainable.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Nigeria society, cattle are the most valuable possession. A person's wealth can be inferred from the number of cattle they possess. In the majority of these cases, this has resulted in serious conflict between the Fulani and nearby farmers. A source of this kind of conflict has been farms invading cattle routes and occasionally watering spots. The problem consists of the cows frequently wandering into the fields to forage for food and the local farmers' grain.

In recent years, conflicts over grazing land have led to more frequent clashes between farming and pastoral communities in some parts of central and northern Nigeria. According to some analysts, the trend can be attributed to the growing desertification that is driving herders southward in their quest for pasture, frequently resulting in conflicts with farmers. Then, what is the question? Might have been the reasons for the disputes? Whatever the reasons, disagreements should inevitably arise in the course of human affairs, and their resolution is also inevitably necessary. The recurring violent conflict between Fulani herders and farmers in Ikole-Ekiti Local Government Area (LGA), Ekiti State, reflects a critical environmental issue threatening peace and sustainable development in the region. This conflict is primarily driven by the competition for land and water resources, which are increasingly scarce due to environmental degradation, overpopulation, and climate change (Odoh & Chigozie, 2012). As the Fulani herders migrate southward in search of grazing land for their livestock, tensions with local farmers over land use have escalated, resulting in frequent clashes, destruction of crops, and loss of livelihoods (Nwankwo, 2018).

The intensity and frequency of these conflicts raise serious concerns about their socio-economic impact on the community. Agriculture is the backbone of the local economy in Ikole-Ekiti, and the disruptions caused by these conflicts have significantly reduced food production, hindered economic growth, and worsened poverty in the area (Ofem & Inyang, 2014). Despite the critical importance of addressing these conflicts for local development, there has been limited success in mitigating the violence, as existing land-use policies and conflict resolution mechanisms are either ineffective or poorly implemented (Adisa & Adegunle, 2010). Moreover, the persistence of the Fulani-farmers' conflict undermines efforts towards achieving sustainable development, as defined by the United Nations (United Nations, 2015). Sustainable development requires balancing economic, social, and environmental objectives, but in Ikole-Ekiti, the environmental degradation and violence resulting from the conflict are stalling progress in all three areas. This situation exacerbates insecurity, displaces communities, and threatens the long-term development prospects of the region (Blench, 2010).

One major problem is the lack of a coordinated response from government agencies at both the local and national levels. Inadequate enforcement of land rights, insufficient conflict mediation mechanisms, and the absence of sustainable grazing solutions have allowed the conflict to escalate unchecked (Baba, 2013). There is also a failure to address the underlying environmental causes of the conflict, such as soil degradation and water scarcity, further entrenching the cycle of violence and impeding the potential for peaceful coexistence. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the environmental factors contributing to the Fulani-farmers' conflict in Ikole-Ekiti, as well as the socio-economic and developmental implications. Understanding the root causes and impacts of these conflicts is essential for

developing sustainable solutions that promote peace, enhance agricultural productivity, and ensure long-term development in the region.

### **Objectives of the study**

The broad objective of the study is to ascertain the impact of environment induced violent conflict on sustainable development in Nigeria, using the case of Fulani/farmer's armed conflict Ikole-Ekiti Local Government Areas, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study are to;

- identify the description of parties involved in the violent conflict in Ikole Local Government Areas in Ekiti State, Nigeria;
- know the nature previous violent conflict occurrences in Ikole Local Government Areas in Ekiti State, Nigeria;
- investigate of the source(s) of Fulani-farmers violent conflict in Ikole Local Government Areas in Ekiti State, Nigeria;
- examine impacts of the violent conflict on agriculture production in Ikole Local Government Areas and Ekiti State in general and;
- Proffer recommendation on workable solution to farmers/herders violent conflict in Ikole Local Government Areas in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **Conflict**

Conflict, as derived from the Latin *confligere* (meaning "to clash" or "engage in a fight"), refers to a confrontation between individuals or groups driven by incompatible goals or methods. It is seen as a goal-oriented activity aimed at improving one party's position at the expense of another (Boulding, 1977). Coser (1956) defines conflict as a struggle over values, status, power, and scarce resources, where individuals or groups seek not only to gain advantage but to neutralize or eliminate rivals. Pruitt and Rubin (1986) describe it as a perceived divergence of interests or the belief that one party's aspirations cannot be achieved alongside another's. Hawks (2020) adds that conflict encompasses disagreements, discord, and friction, emphasizing its association with differing ideologies and suggesting that when properly managed, conflict can lead to positive development. Conflict is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by clashing interests, values, or objectives, and it can emerge at personal, organizational, or societal levels. Galtung (2022) attributes many conflicts to structural inequalities, resource competition, and cultural differences, which can intensify if unresolved. Hampson (2023) notes that conflict tends to escalate when communication fails and opposing parties become entrenched in adversarial roles. The broader social and psychological effects of

conflict extend beyond direct participants, impacting entire communities and undermining social cohesion. To mitigate such consequences, conflict resolution mechanisms such as negotiation, mediation, and dialogue are essential. According to Coleman and Gold (2023), successful conflict resolution hinges on acknowledging the needs of all stakeholders and fostering collaborative, inclusive solutions. Promoting a culture of peace and conflict sensitivity is crucial for long-term stability and sustainable development.

### **Violent Conflict**

Violent conflict, though a contested concept, generally involves the use of physical force to achieve political, social, or economic goals, often at the expense of lives, properties, and societal stability. It can take many forms—physical, psychological, structural, or cultural—with physical violence typically involving open acts of harm such as torture, rape, or killing to coerce or manipulate (Dennen, 2019; Wikipedia, 2024). Structural violence, as Galtung (1996) describes, is more covert and occurs through unjust social systems that hinder individuals from reaching their full physical and mental potential. According to the Geneva Declaration (2006), violent conflict entails the illegitimate use of actual or threatened force that undermines human security and development. Kalyvas (2023) notes that such violence often arises from a complex blend of historical grievances, inequality, and marginalization, and its effects can be devastating, including forced displacement, institutional collapse, and social fragmentation. Adebayo (2024) and Mampilly (2022) further observe that unresolved conflicts often lead to cycles of continued violence.

In Nigeria, particularly in Ikole Local Government Area of Ekiti State, violent conflict has been exemplified by recurrent clashes between farmers and herders, a conflict that dates back to independence in 1960 and has escalated notably in the Fourth Republic. These confrontations are driven by competition over resources and perceived injustices in the socio-political and economic structure, where communities believe the government and multinational actors have failed in fair resource distribution. This persistent conflict reflects broader national issues of exclusion, marginalization, and unfulfilled promises, fueling grievances that manifest violently. Resolving such conflict requires more than surface-level peace building; it demands addressing root causes through inclusive governance, equitable resource allocation, and sustainable development efforts (Dawson, 2023).

### **Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development is a multidimensional concept that seeks to balance economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection to meet present needs without compromising the future (Brundtland, 1987). As Akinbode (2023) notes, it involves creating development strategies that ensure long-term ecological health while fostering social and economic equity. Adabembe and Adedayo (2022)



describe sustainable development as both qualitative and quantitative societal change, while Ebeh and Google (2022) emphasize its role in enhancing living standards by ensuring access to basic needs. Ultimately, national development is viewed as a comprehensive advancement in economic, political, educational, and socio-cultural spheres that positively affects citizens and the nation at large.

The environmental component of sustainable development emphasizes the sustainable use of natural resources, the promotion of renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, and carbon emission reduction (Okeke & Johnson, 2022). Economic sustainability calls for responsible production and long-term efficiency, often achieved through green economic models that reduce environmental harm while boosting innovation and productivity (Ibrahim & Adewuyi, 2023). Social sustainability focuses on equity and inclusion, aiming to eradicate poverty, improve education, and uphold human rights. This aligns closely with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which offer a global framework to achieve integrated progress across all three pillars of sustainability (Emeka & Olajide, 2023).

## **Environment**

The environment encompasses all physical, biological, and social elements that influence the well-being of living organisms, including natural resources like air, water, and land, as well as human-made infrastructures such as cities and industries (Onuoha, 2021). Human interaction with the environment—particularly through deforestation, industrialization, and pollution—has significantly altered ecological balance and contributed to global issues like climate change and biodiversity loss (Adewumi & Fasakin, 2022). These environmental disruptions have prompted increased advocacy for sustainability and the development of a "green economy" that integrates environmental conservation with economic growth (Ogunleye, 2023). The sustainable use of natural resources is vital to ensuring environmental resilience and long-term human survival. In addressing these challenges, global and national efforts have emerged to implement policies targeting environmental preservation and climate resilience. Frameworks such as the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize collaborative actions to reduce environmental harm and foster sustainability. In Nigeria, specific policy measures have been introduced to tackle desertification, protect biodiversity, and curb pollution, reflecting the crucial link between environmental stability, human security, and socio-economic development (Emeka & Akinyemi, 2023). These initiatives highlight the growing recognition of the environment's central role in supporting life and development.

### Trends in Herders-Farmers' Conflict in South-Western, Nigeria

Table 1 depicts the occurrence and effect of some violent conflict in Nigeria. These recorded conflicts shows the prevailing condition of frequent crisis all over the Nation since the return to civil rule in 1999.

**Table 1:** Some Major Conflicts since the Return to Civil Rule in May, 1999.

(Nigeria Case)

S/NO	Location	Date	Nature
1	Ogun (Imosan)	Nov. 9, 1999	Hausa Fulani Muslim Vs Oro Cult.
2	Lagos	Nov. 27, 1999	Hausa Fulani Muslim Vs Yoruba
3	Oyo	Jan. 5, 2000	Hausa/ Fulani Vs Yoruba
4	Oyo Saki	April, 24, 2000	Hausa Fulani Muslim Vs Christians
5	Oyo Saki	May . 6,2000	Hausa Fulani Muslim Vs Yoruba.
6	Ogun(Sagamu)	July.18, 2000	Hausa Fulani Muslim Vs Yoruba.
7	Lagos	Oct.15, 2000	Hausa Fulani Muslim Vs Yoruba.
8	Oyo (Ibadan)	Oct. 2000	Hausa Fulani Muslim Vs Yoruba.
9	Lagos (Alaba)	Oct.16, 2000	Hausa Fulani Muslim Vs Igbo.
10	Lagos	Oct.17,2000	Hausa Fulani Muslim Vs OPC.
11	Lagos	Nov.25,2000	Hausa Fulani Vs Yoruba.
12	Osun (osogbo)	Nov.29,2001	Yoruba Fundamentalists vs Christians
13	Lagos	Feb.2,2002	Hausa Fulani Muslim Vs Christians.

**Source:** Statistical Bulletin from Federal Ministry of Statistics

### Relationship between Environment-Induced Violent Conflict and Sustainable Development

The relationship between environment-induced violent conflict and sustainable development is complex and deeply interwoven. In Nigeria, environmental



stressors such as climate change, land degradation, and resource scarcity have contributed significantly to violent clashes, particularly between Fulani herdsman and farming communities. These tensions, largely over access to land and water, have disrupted agricultural productivity and social cohesion, posing serious threats to development initiatives in affected regions. Understanding and addressing this dynamic is crucial for designing effective peace building and development strategies (Bako et al., 2023; Ibrahim & Aliyu, 2023).

Environmental degradation serves as a key driver of these conflicts. Climate-induced changes like desertification and extended dry seasons in northern Nigeria have pushed pastoralists into southern regions, increasing competition over arable land and water. This migration has often resulted in violent encounters between herders and sedentary farmers, leading to the destruction of crops and livestock, displacement of communities, and a drop in agricultural productivity (Bako et al., 2023). As farmers abandon their land due to insecurity, food security and economic stability are undermined, making it more difficult for Nigeria to achieve sustainable development targets (Ibrahim & Aliyu, 2023). These conflicts significantly impede the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). The violence reduces food production, discourages investment, and disrupts governance structures, particularly in rural areas (Mamman & Nwosu, 2023). Environmental degradation and recurring violence stall both economic growth and effective policy implementation, making it harder to foster sustainability. Integrated resource management and sustainable agricultural practices are necessary to mitigate environmental stress and promote peace (Ojo & Ogunleye, 2024).

The environmental challenges are especially visible in northern Nigeria, where desertification and deforestation intensify migration and conflict. Akinyemi (2022) notes that Fulani herders increasingly move southward due to environmental stress, leading to competition with farmers in places like Ekiti State. This competition is intensified by socio-economic vulnerabilities, where environmental degradation not only reduces productivity but also ignites tensions between traditionally coexisting communities (Okoli & Atelhe, 2020). These tensions contribute to a cycle of violence and instability that severely impacts local livelihoods. To achieve sustainable development in conflict-prone areas like Ikole-Ekiti, comprehensive approaches that combine environmental sustainability with conflict resolution are essential. Arowolo and Fasanmi (2023) emphasize the need for policies addressing environmental degradation and promoting equitable resource access. Community-based dialogue and mediation, as highlighted by Adeola (2022), are also crucial to conflict resolution. Ultimately, peace and sustainable development are interdependent. Without resolving environmental and socio-economic conflicts, sustainable growth and stability will remain out of reach.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This aspect of the study discusses the theory that forms the framework with which the research works is built. For the purpose of this study, the theory used is Relative Deprivation Theory.

Relative Deprivation Theory, a component of broader social movement theories, has been adopted to examine the impact of environment-induced violent conflict on sustainable development in Nigeria, with a focus on the Fulani/farmer conflict in Ikole-Ekiti Local Government Area, Ekiti State. The theory distinguishes between absolute deprivation—manifested in physical abuse, poverty, and starvation—and relative deprivation, which centers on the gap between individuals' expectations and their actual experiences (Gurr, 1970). According to Gurr, relative deprivation occurs when people's legitimate desires are blocked by societal constraints, leading to discontent and potential mobilization. While such feelings do not always result in social movements, they often provide the psychological basis for collective action (Morrison, 2017). Originally formulated by Dollard et al. (1939), the theory connects unmet expectations and societal inequalities to aggression and social unrest. It has since underpinned other major social psychology theories, including frustration-aggression, equity, and social comparison theories. Walker and Smith (2012) emphasize that relative deprivation can escalate to social deviance such as political violence, civil wars, and crime. Animasawun (2015) adds that the intensity and duration of frustration play critical roles in determining the likelihood of violent outcomes, reinforcing the idea that persistent deprivation can drive individuals and groups toward aggressive and destructive behavior.

In the Nigerian context, relative deprivation theory explains the recurring conflicts between farmers and herders, where citizens perceive inequality, neglect, and unfulfilled promises from the state. This is particularly evident in Ikole-Ekiti, where frequent violent clashes, destruction of farmlands, and loss of lives highlight the government's failure to uphold its constitutional responsibility of protecting its citizens. The theory thus serves as a lens through which the underlying socio-political frustrations and human security threats in Nigeria can be understood, emphasizing that unresolved grievances are fertile ground for environmental and resource-based conflicts.

## **Research Methods**

The study employed a descriptive and survey research design to examine environment-induced armed conflict and sustainable development, focusing specifically on the Fulani-farmers conflict in Ikole-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State, Nigeria, from 2010 to 2025. Data were gathered through questionnaires, interviews, and personal observations to analyze the root causes and effects of the conflict, particularly environmental degradation and competition over land and water. This design allowed for comprehensive insights from stakeholders such as

farmers, herders, local leaders, and government officials, aiming to explore socio-economic impacts and potential pathways toward sustainable development. The target population included various stakeholders affected by the conflict—farmers, Fulani herders, traditional rulers, youth leaders, religious leaders, government officials, and NGOs. The study area, Ikole-Ekiti, spans 374,940 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 168,436 (2006 census). It consists of 24 towns and multiple villages, including prominent communities such as Ikole, Oke Ako, Iyemero, and Itapaji. A total of 150 respondents were sampled—50 from the local government headquarters and 100 from other communities—using a random sampling technique to ensure representation.

The research instruments included a validated and reliable structured questionnaire featuring both open- and close-ended questions. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was aligned with research questions and vetted by experts. Reliability was confirmed by comparing findings with previous similar studies. Data collection involved both primary sources (questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions) and secondary sources (literature and reports). Analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data to uncover trends in conflict dynamics, socio-economic effects, and sustainable development strategies.

### **Findings of Research Objective 1: The Description of Parties Involved in the Violent Conflict in Ikole Local Government Areas in Ekiti State, Nigeria**

**Table 2: Description of Parties Involved in the Violent Conflict in Ikole Local Government Areas in Ekiti State, Nigeria**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Agreed</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Disagreed</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Local youth groups play a significant role in the violent conflict in Ikole LGA.	150	137	91.33%	13	8.67%
Disputes between farmers and herders are a primary source of violent conflict in Ikole LGA.	150	139	92.67%	11	7.33%
External actors, such as neighboring communities or outsiders, contribute to the escalation of violence in Ikole LGA.	150	143	95.33%	7	4.67%

Community leaders and elders are involved in attempts to resolve the conflicts in Ikole LGA.	150	145	96.67%	5	3.33%
Religious differences among community members contribute to the violent conflict in Ikole LGA	150	142	94.67%	8	5.33%
Political groups are actively involved in fueling tensions in the Ikole conflict.	150	143	95.33%	7	4.67%

**Source: Fieldwork, 2025.**

The analysis of Table 2 reveals a complex interplay of actors and factors contributing to the violent conflicts in Ikole Local Government Area (LGA) in Ekiti State, Nigeria. A significant majority of respondents (91.33%) agreed that local youth groups play a crucial role in the conflict, underscoring the active involvement of young people, possibly as direct participants or agitators in the violence. Additionally, disputes between farmers and herders were identified by 92.67% of respondents as a primary source of conflict, emphasizing the ongoing tension surrounding resource competition and land use in the region. These findings highlight the localized nature of conflict drivers and the central role of socio-economic disputes in fueling violence.

The involvement of external actors, such as neighboring communities or outsiders, was highlighted by 95.33% of respondents as a factor escalating the violence, demonstrating that the conflicts are not entirely internal but are influenced by regional dynamics. Community leaders and elders were reported to play a significant role in conflict resolution efforts, with 96.67% agreement, reflecting the reliance on traditional authority structures to mediate disputes. Despite their involvement, the high levels of violence indicate that these efforts may be inadequate or undermined by other factors. Religious differences were also reported as a contributing factor by 94.67% of respondents, pointing to the potential for identity-based tensions to exacerbate existing disputes.

Political groups were identified as key actors in fueling tensions, with 95.33% of respondents agreeing to their involvement. This suggests that political agendas and competition may exploit or aggravate local grievances for political gain, further complicating the conflict landscape. The high levels of agreement across these categories illustrate the multifaceted and interconnected nature of violent conflict in

Ikole LGA, highlighting the need for a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach to conflict resolution that addresses the economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions of the violence.

**Findings of Research Objective 2 (The Nature Previous Violent Conflict Occurrences in Ikole Local Government Areas in Ekiti State, Nigeria)**

**Table 3: Nature Previous Violent Conflict Occurrences in Ikole Local Government Areas in Ekiti State, Nigeria**

Response	Total	Agreed	Percentage	Disagreed	Percentage
Previous violent conflicts in Ikole were primarily driven by ethnic or communal differences.	150	135	90%	15	10%
The violent conflicts in Ikole have often been characterized by the use of firearms and other dangerous weapons.	150	121	80.67%	29	19.33%
Land disputes between farmers and herders have been a recurring cause of violence in Ikole LGA.	150	141	94%	9	6%
Political rivalry and election-related tensions have played a major role in the violent conflicts in Ikole LGA.	150	136	90.67%	14	9.33%
Religious tensions have been a significant factor in the escalation of violent conflicts in Ikole LGA.	150	101	67.33%	49	32.67%

**Source: Fieldwork, 2025.**

The data presented in Table 3 provides insights into the nature and drivers of previous violent conflict occurrences in Ikole Local Government Area (LGA) of Ekiti State, Nigeria. A significant majority (90%) of respondents agreed that ethnic and

communal differences were primary drivers of past conflicts, underscoring the deep-rooted nature of identity-based tensions in the region. This reflects the role of group identities and affiliations in fueling violence, which may stem from long-standing grievances and competition for resources or power. Additionally, 94% of respondents identified land disputes between farmers and herders as a recurring cause of violence, highlighting the centrality of resource-based conflicts, particularly over land, in Ikole LGA. This aligns with broader trends of herder-farmer tensions in Nigeria, often exacerbated by environmental pressures and competing livelihood needs.

The use of firearms and other dangerous weapons in violent conflicts was acknowledged by 80.67% of respondents, indicating a concerning trend of armed violence in the region. This suggests the accessibility of small arms and light weapons, which intensify the scale and lethality of conflicts. Furthermore, 90.67% of respondents agreed that political rivalry and election-related tensions have been major contributors to violence, emphasizing the destabilizing impact of political competition and the manipulation of local grievances for political gain. These findings highlight the interplay of political and socio-economic factors in exacerbating conflicts in Ikole LGA.

Interestingly, religious tensions were reported as a factor in the escalation of violent conflicts by 67.33% of respondents, which, while significant, is comparatively lower than other factors like land disputes and political rivalry. This suggests that while religion plays a role, it may act as a secondary or complementary factor rather than a primary driver. The findings overall underscore the multifaceted nature of violent conflicts in Ikole LGA, driven by a combination of ethnic, political, economic, and religious factors. Addressing these conflicts will require a holistic approach that tackles the underlying structural issues, such as resource allocation, political governance, and community relations.

### **Findings of Research Objective 3 (The Source(s) of Fulani-Farmers Violent Conflict in Ikole Local Government Areas in Ekiti State, Nigeria)**

**Table 4: The Source(s) of Fulani-Farmers Violent Conflict in Ikole Local Government Areas in Ekiti State, Nigeria**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Agreed</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Disagreed</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Destruction of crops by cattle has been a major cause of violence between Fulani herders and farmers in Ikole LGA.	150	142	94.67%	8	5.33%



Land disputes between Fulani herders and farmers are the primary source of violent conflict in Ikole LGA.	150	133	88.67%	17	11.33%
The lack of proper grazing routes and land for Fulani herders contributes significantly to the violent conflict in Ikole LGA.	150	131	87.33%	19	12.67%
Cultural and ethnic differences between Fulani herders and the farming communities in Ikole exacerbate the conflict LGA.	150	140	93.33%	10	6.67%
The failure of local authorities to mediate or enforce agreements has contributed to the escalation of the Fulani-farmers conflict in Ikole LGA.	150	132	88%	18	12%
Competition for limited water resources during the dry season has led to violent confrontations between Fulani herders and farmers.	150	134	89.33%	16	10.67%

**Source: Fieldwork, 2025.**

The analysis of Table 4 highlights the multifaceted nature of the Fulani-farmers violent conflict in Ikole Local Government Area (LGA), Ekiti State, Nigeria. A striking 94.67% of respondents identified the destruction of crops by cattle as a major cause of violence, emphasizing the impact of livestock encroachment on farmlands as a direct trigger for conflict. This finding reflects the deep-rooted tension between

agricultural practices and herding activities, which is further exacerbated by limited mechanisms for damage compensation or conflict resolution. Similarly, 88.67% of respondents attributed land disputes between Fulani herders and farmers as a primary source of violence, highlighting the contested access to and ownership of land in the region. These conflicts are intensified by the lack of clear land use policies and effective enforcement mechanisms.

The lack of proper grazing routes and land allocation for Fulani herders was agreed upon by 87.33% of respondents as a significant contributor to the conflict. This points to systemic challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure for livestock management and the absence of sustainable land-sharing frameworks, which force herders to encroach on farmland. Furthermore, cultural and ethnic differences between Fulani herders and the farming communities were acknowledged by 93.33% of respondents as exacerbating the violence. This suggests that identity-based tensions compound resource-based disputes, creating a volatile conflict environment in Ikole LGA. Such cultural and ethnic divides may lead to mutual mistrust and prejudice, further reducing the chances of peaceful coexistence.

Lastly, institutional weaknesses appear to play a critical role in the persistence of these conflicts. The failure of local authorities to mediate disputes or enforce agreements was highlighted by 88% of respondents, indicating a lack of effective governance in managing local grievances. Additionally, competition for limited water resources during the dry season was cited by 89.33% of respondents as another trigger for violent confrontations. This underscores the seasonal and environmental dimensions of the conflict, particularly as climate change worsens resource scarcity. Addressing these conflicts will require a multidimensional approach, including clear land-use policies, improved local governance, and culturally sensitive conflict resolution mechanisms.

#### **Findings of Research Objective 4 (The Impacts of the Violent Conflict on Agriculture Production in Ikole Local Government Areas and Ekiti State in General)**

**Table 5: Impacts of the Violent Conflict on Agriculture Production in Ikole Local Government Areas and Ekiti State in General**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Agreed</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Disagreed</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Violent conflicts between farmers and herders have significantly reduced agricultural productivity in Ikole and Ekiti State.	150	131	87.33%	19	12.67%

The destruction of crops and farmlands during violent conflicts has led to financial losses for farmers in Ikole.	150	142	94.67%	8	5.33%
Violence in Ikole has disrupted the planting and harvesting seasons, negatively affecting crop yields in Ekiti State.	150	110	73.33%	40	26.67%
The violent conflict has caused a shortage of labor on farms in Ikole and Ekiti State, further harming agricultural output.	150	124	82.67%	26	17.33%
Farmers in Ikole are increasingly abandoning their farms due to fear of violence, which has led to a decline in agricultural production.	150	127	84.67%	13	8.67%
The overall economic impact of the violent conflict has worsened the livelihoods of farmers, contributing to poverty in Ikole and Ekiti State.	150	112	74.67%	38	25.33%

**Source: Fieldwork, 2025.**

The data in Table 11 underscores the severe and multifaceted impacts of violent conflict on agricultural production in Ikole Local Government Area (LGA) and Ekiti State as a whole. A significant majority of respondents (87.33%) agreed that the conflicts between farmers and herders have drastically reduced agricultural productivity in the region. This reduction is directly linked to the widespread

destruction of crops and farmlands during violent incidents, with 94.67% of respondents highlighting these losses as a major consequence. Such destruction not only disrupts food supply but also results in financial hardships for farmers, diminishing their ability to reinvest in farming and maintain productivity.

The conflicts have also caused significant disruptions to the agricultural calendar. Approximately 73.33% of respondents agreed that violence has negatively affected planting and harvesting seasons, leading to reduced crop yields across Ekiti State. This disruption is further compounded by a shortage of labor, as 82.67% of respondents noted that fear of violence has driven farm workers away. The resulting labor shortages have exacerbated the decline in agricultural output, creating a cycle of underproduction and economic stagnation. Furthermore, 84.67% of respondents reported that farmers are abandoning their farmlands due to insecurity, highlighting the long-term implications of violent conflict on the region's agricultural sustainability.

Beyond the direct impact on farming, the violent conflict has broader socio-economic consequences. According to 74.67% of respondents, the violence has worsened the livelihoods of farmers, contributing to increased poverty in Ikole and Ekiti State. This finding highlights the interconnectedness of agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods, where the loss of farmland and income from agriculture exacerbates economic vulnerability. Overall, the data emphasizes the urgent need for conflict resolution strategies and agricultural interventions to restore stability, support farmers, and mitigate the far-reaching impacts of violence on food security and economic development in the region.

#### **Findings of Research Objective 5 (Recommendation on Workable Solution to Farmer/Herder Violent Conflict in Ikole Local Government Areas in Ekiti State, Nigeria)**

**Table 6: Recommendation on Workable Solution to Farmer/Herder Violent Conflict in Ikole Local Government Areas in Ekiti State, Nigeria**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Agreed</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Disagreed</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Establishing designated grazing routes and reserves for Fulani herders would help reduce violent conflicts with farmers in Ikole LGA.	150	131	87.33%	19	12.67%
Increased dialogue and collaboration between farmers and	150	142	94.67%	8	5.33%

herders can lead to peaceful coexistence and reduce violence in Ikole LGA.					
The government should provide financial support or compensation for farmers whose crops are destroyed by cattle to mitigate conflict.	150	110	73.33%	40	26.67%
Creating joint committees made up of community leaders, farmers, and herders to mediate and resolve conflicts could prevent violence in Ikole LGA.	150	124	82.67%	26	17.33%
Awareness programs to educate both farmers and herders on conflict resolution and sustainable land management practices would reduce violence in Ikole LGA.	150	127	84.67%	13	8.67%
Strengthening law enforcement and ensuring the punishment of perpetrators of violent acts would deter future violence between farmers and herders in Ikole LGA.	150	112	74.67%	38	25.33%

**Source: Fieldwork, 2025.**

The recommendations outlined in Table 12 provide actionable solutions to address the persistent violent conflicts between farmers and herders in Ikole Local

Government Area (LGA), Ekiti State. A significant majority (87.33%) of respondents agreed that establishing designated grazing routes and reserves for Fulani herders could mitigate the conflicts by reducing disputes over land use. This approach reflects the need for structured land-use planning to balance the interests of farmers and herders. Additionally, 94.67% of respondents emphasized the importance of fostering increased dialogue and collaboration between the two groups to promote peaceful coexistence. This underscores the necessity of building trust and encouraging community-driven conflict resolution efforts.

The creation of joint committees comprising community leaders, farmers, and herders was supported by 82.67% of respondents, highlighting the potential of inclusive mediation platforms in resolving disputes. Such committees could provide a locally driven and culturally sensitive mechanism for addressing grievances before they escalate into violence. Similarly, 84.67% of respondents advocated for awareness programs to educate farmers and herders on conflict resolution and sustainable land management practices. These programs could equip both parties with the tools to manage resources effectively and reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings that lead to violence. Financial support or compensation for farmers affected by cattle destruction, supported by 73.33%, was also identified as a crucial step in mitigating tensions by alleviating the economic burdens on farmers. Strengthening law enforcement and ensuring that perpetrators of violence are held accountable were endorsed by 74.67% of respondents as key measures to deter future conflicts. This recommendation highlights the need for institutional reforms to ensure justice and restore public confidence in the rule of law. Together, these recommendations reflect a multidimensional approach that combines structural, educational, and enforcement strategies to address the root causes of the farmer-herder conflicts in Ikole LGA. By implementing these measures, sustainable peace and improved agricultural productivity can be achieved in the region.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings reveal that violent conflict in Ikole Local Government Area (LGA) is driven by multiple and interconnected actors. Local youth groups are heavily involved, likely motivated by socio-economic grievances, while disputes between farmers and herders over land and resources form a central source of tension. The involvement of external actors from neighboring communities adds complexity, indicating that the violence extends beyond internal community issues. Although community leaders and elders attempt to mediate conflicts, their efforts appear limited by factors such as insufficient authority or conflicting interests. Religious differences also play a role in heightening tensions, often intertwining with socio-economic and political disputes to create a fragile environment for peace building. Political groups contribute significantly to escalating the conflict, as political competition and agendas manipulate existing local grievances. This convergence of



political, economic, cultural, and identity-based factors makes the conflict highly complex and resistant to simple solutions. Addressing the conflict in Ikole LGA requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach involving traditional leaders, government bodies, and civil society. Interventions should prioritize resolving resource management challenges, mitigating identity-based tensions, and curbing political exploitation. Only through such a multi-stakeholder strategy can sustainable peace and stability be achieved in the region.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the violent conflicts in Ikole Local Government Area (LGA), Ekiti State, are driven by a complex interplay of socio-economic, political, and cultural factors. Youth involvement, ethnic tensions, and resource competition between farmers and herders are primary sources of the conflict, while external actors and political manipulation further exacerbate the situation. The persistence of these conflicts underscores the need for a multifaceted approach to peace building, incorporating interventions to address resource management, identity-based tensions, and political instability. A comprehensive strategy involving traditional leaders, government institutions, and civil society is essential for restoring peace and ensuring long-term stability in the region.

The nature of previous violent conflicts in Ikole LGA highlights the enduring impact of ethnic and communal grievances, as well as the centrality of land disputes and the availability of firearms. Political rivalry and election-related tensions also contribute significantly to the violence, illustrating the profound connection between political instability and social unrest. Addressing these underlying drivers requires targeted efforts to resolve resource disputes, enhance governance, and promote intergroup dialogue. Additionally, measures to curb the proliferation of small arms, coupled with trust-building initiatives, will be crucial in fostering sustainable peace and breaking the cycle of violence.

Finally, the impact of violent conflict on agriculture in Ikole LGA is profound, with widespread crop destruction, disruption of farming activities, and the abandonment of farmlands leading to financial distress and food insecurity. The economic vulnerability of rural households is directly linked to the decline in agricultural productivity, exacerbating poverty levels. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that combines conflict resolution with support for farmers, including financial aid and resource provision. Furthermore, the implementation of recommendations such as the establishment of grazing reserves, law enforcement strengthening, and community-driven dialogue initiatives will be key in mitigating the ongoing farmer-herder conflicts and fostering long-term socio-economic development in Ikole LGA and Ekiti State.

## **Recommendations**

- 1) To address the root causes of land disputes between farmers and herders, it is crucial to implement clear and enforceable land-use policies that designate grazing routes and reserves for Fulani herders. These policies should be designed to reduce encroachment on farmlands and ensure a fair distribution of land resources, thus minimizing conflicts between the two groups.
- 2) Fostering dialogue and collaboration between farmers and herders is vital for building mutual understanding and trust. Initiating community-driven conflict resolution programs, such as joint committees comprising community leaders, farmers, herders, and local authorities, can help mediate grievances and prevent violent escalations. These committees should be empowered to resolve disputes peacefully and address underlying issues.
- 3) Weak local governance and inadequate dispute resolution mechanisms exacerbate the violence in Ikole LGA. Strengthening the capacity of local authorities to mediate conflicts and enforce agreements is crucial. This includes enhancing the ability of traditional leaders, community elders, and local governments to effectively intervene in conflicts, as well as ensuring proper law enforcement in conflict-prone areas.
- 4) Awareness campaigns and education programs for both farmers and herders should focus on conflict resolution, sustainable land management practices, and the importance of peaceful coexistence. These programs can empower local communities with the skills and knowledge to manage resources effectively and reduce misunderstandings that fuel violence.
- 5) To mitigate the socio-economic impact of the violent conflict on agriculture, it is necessary to provide financial assistance or compensation for farmers whose crops have been destroyed by cattle. This would help alleviate the financial strain on farmers, encourage the return of displaced individuals to their farms, and restore agricultural productivity in the region.

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