

## Ending Herdsmen Attack in Benue State: Perceived Human Need Approach

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### Abstract

Fulani herdsmen constitute a minority group in Nigeria who move from place to place in search of grass land and water for their cattle. Nigeria has experienced series of violent attacks and clashes between them and farmers over some past ages. From 1996 to 2006, about 121 people lost their lives in Bauchi and Gombe States. In contemporary, it has degenerated too many to other North East States such as Benue, Taraba, and in the South such as Enugu, Anambra, Delta, Ekiti, etc. Nigerian government is yet to come up with a permanent solution to resolving this conflict with farmers and their other victims. This work examined human need approach to ending herdsmen attack in Benue State. The participants include eighty males (N=80) Fulani cattle pastoralists in Benue state. Age ranged from 15 years to 45 years with mean age of 33.5 years. Human need theory was adopted to explain systematic way of preventing herdsmen attack to people in their ancestral home land. Personal Need for Structure (PNS) Questionnaire was used for data collection in the study. Mean and Standard Deviation was used for data analysis, and the result showed that Fulani herdsmen responded to lack of structure and they have a general need for pastoral structure in Nigeria. The researcher recommended that the federal government should carve out states for Fulani herdsmen in the north that support the Fulani nomadic culture and restrict them within the states in order to gain structure, identity and, also adopt the modern way of pasturing and to avoid using people's crops as pasture for cattle.

**Keywords:** *Herdsmen, Conflict, Human need*

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## **Background to the Study**

Fulani herdsmen also called Pastoralists constitute a minority group in Nigeria whose primary occupation is raising livestock especially cattle by migrating from place to place in search of grass land and water for their animals. Historically, Fulani Pastoralists started migrating into Northern Nigeria from the Senegambia region between thirteenth to fourteenth century (Tonah, 2002). After Uthman Danfodio Jihad, the Fulanis became integrated into the Hausa culture of Northern Nigeria. They moved their cattle to the middle belt during the dry season and returns to the North at the onset of the rainy season. During this process of moving the cattle, they engage in grazing the cattle on farmlands, leading to destruction of crops, and becoming a source of conflict between the Pastoralists and the Farmers.

Benue state has experienced a consistent and devastating violent conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and famers/indigenes of the land in the recent years. Thousands of people have been killed, some displaced, communities and properties destroyed in such places like; Guma, Logo, Mbatoho Makurdi, Mbakyondo, Mbakpa, Sengaev, Agatu, Agasha, and TseOrogbo local government areas of the state. This has created inter cultural violence conflict and threatens the peace and cohesion of Nigeria. Some other states in Nigeria have experienced such series of violent attacks and clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers over some past ages. From 1996 to 2006, about 121 people lost their lives in Bauchi and Gombe States. In contemporary, it has degenerated so much to many other North East states especially Taraba and Kogi but crisis in Benue has been intensive and consistent. Also, it has reached the South such as Enugu, Anambra, Delta and Ekiti states, etc. The herdsmen or pastoralists versus farmer's/indigenes reprisal attacks have developed to a national crisis and Nigerian government is yet to come up with a permanent solution to resolving this conflict between the farmers and Fulani herdsmen.

Due to ethnic and cultural differences in Nigeria, many Nigerians perceive the movement of Fulani herdsmen to have a different purpose and intention. Those that support the Fulani herdsmen feel that it is their right as enshrined in Section 41(1) of Nigerian Constitution to continue their business in migrating form. That is by moving their cattle to any part of the country without distraction. The supporters of Fulani herdsmen activities supported establishment of grazing reserve in every state of the Federation as the only solution to ending herdsmen crisis in Benue and Nigeria at large. The Northern signatory to this support as stated in Premium Time (January, 12<sup>th</sup> 2018) stated as follows:

*“It is clear that Nigeria and indeed, Africa have to plan towards the transformation of pastoralism into settled forms of animal husbandry. The establishment of grazing reserves provides the opportunity for practicing a more limited form of pastoralism and is therefore a pathway towards a more settled form of animal husbandry. Nigeria has a total of 417 grazing reserves out of which only about 113 have been gazette. Whether we support or oppose pastoralism, it is clear that at least in the short and medium term, many herds must continue to practice seasonal migration between dry and wet season grazing areas. Ultimately, there is the need for permanent settlement of pastoralists.”*

Those who oppose Fulani herdsmen activities are mostly the opposing culture that does not practice nomadic life. They live a settled life and practice modern way of rearing live stocks in a settled and secluded environment. They have so much promoted restructuring of Nigeria in order to give each state of the federation opportunity to devise a means of developing based on cultural and economic affiliation. Some of these states especially those that have been affected by herdsmen attack have enacted laws while some are processing bills to prevent open grazing on their territory. Examples of such states include: Ekiti state, Edo state, Benue state, etc. However, reading Nigerian history and Jihad war on introduction of Islamic religion in Nigeria by Uthman Danfodio makes this set of Nigerians to believe that Fulani herdsmen activities is another form of introduction of Islamic religion and forcing its practices on them. The two perspectives on Fulani herdsmen activities in Nigeria have exacerbated the violence conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers, and have made a mutual conclusion on cubing the menace of the crisis impossible.

In the year 2016, the federal government proposed a bill for an act to establish grazing reserve in each of the states of the federation to curb incessant conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers. The bill did not gain Nigerian support because the proposal to establish grazing reserve in each of the states of Nigeria did not land in a mutual benefit. The bill did not consider the land use act of 1978, and was made to displace some people from their ancestral home land in order to allow Fulanis for grazing reserve. The bill however, did not gain support because it did not consider the cultural differences between the Fulani herdsmen and other Nigerian populace. It is only Fulanis in Nigeria that has a nomadic culture. The people of Nigeria did not accept it as right to give up their land in order to create grazing reserve for Fulani's private business while most of other Nigerian farmers have their live stocks in their own secluded modern way. To this end, the present study examined the perceived human need approach to ending herdsmen attack in Benue State. The study tends to determine whether Fulani herdsmen need a structure for identity and grazing in Nigeria.

### **Human Need Theories**

Human need theories offer valuable insights into the sources of conflict by examining the roots of conflict and possible strategies for its resolution. Human need theorists argue that violent conflicts are caused by unmet human needs. Violence conflict occurs when some people or groups do not see how to meet their need, or when they need understanding, respect and consideration for their needs. Human need theories follow the nonnegotiable pattern of human need, and wants to proffer solution to lingering conflict. According to Burton (1993) universal human needs are often neglected, leading groups to use violence to claim their rights and satisfying their needs. Burton argues that education and culture make some groups manipulate the issues and dehumanizing the other groups. Rosenberg (2003) on his own approach argues that human needs are universal and meeting them is essential to human survival and well-being. He also noted that education and culture often alienate people from connecting with real needs. According to Rosenberg (2003), violence conflict is a tragic expression of unmet human needs. This means that all actions undertaken by human beings are able to connect with what they need and those of others. Maslow (1970) concentrated on the hierarchy of needs, proposing that some needs are more urgent than others. On his

pyramid of need, food, water and shelter come first, then the need for safety and security come second followed by need for belonging or love. The need for self-esteem is fourth followed by need for personal fulfillment. Herdsmen attack to farmers is rooted on human need satisfaction. The conflict started as herdsmen approach to the satisfaction of their need for pasture for cattle, trampling on farmers move in satisfaction of their own primary need for food. The struggles for satisfaction of need for food culminate to threat for security need. In order words, the encroachment of herdsmen to farmer's personal space resulted to a threat for security need. To this end, the consequence or pressure mounted by the move to satisfy herdsmen and farmers need, lead to attack; counter attack, clashes, conflict, violence and killing. To address such menace, it is required to finding a means of satisfying both the herdsmen need and farmers need.

### Methodology

The participants include eighty males (N=80) Fulani cattle pastoralists in Benue state. Age ranged from 15 years to 45 years with mean age of 33.5 years. Human need theory was adopted to explain systematic way of ending herdsmen and farmers conflict. It was assumed that the herdsmen will agree on human need for structure. A six (6) point likert rating scale made up of 12 structured Personal Need for Structure (PNS) Questionnaire (Thomson, Naccarato, Parker & Moskowitz, 2001) was used for data collection in the study. Mean and Standard Deviation was used for data analysis and the boundary limits for accepted mean scores was 2.50 while mean score below 2.50 was rejected. The decision rule adopted for this study is shown in Table 1.

**Table1:** Decision Rule Table

Nominal Values	Range of Mean	Mode of Response
6	5.50-6.00	Strongly Agreed
5	4.50-5.00	Moderately Agreed
4	3.50-4.00	Slightly Agreed
3	2.50-3.49	Slightly Disagreed
2	1.50-2.49	Moderately Disagreed
1	0.50-1.49	Strongly Disagree

### Result

The mean score of the participants indicated that Fulani herdsmen need structure for their pasturing and agreed to 8 items out of 12 items of the questionnaires with mean score ranging from 4.23-5.0 except items 2, 5, 6 and 11 which were between 1.98 - 2.53. The result showed that Fulani herdsmen responded to lack of structure and they have a general need for identity and structure in Nigeria.

## **Discussion**

The present study examined the application of four theories proposed by Abraham Maslow, John Burton, Marshall Rosenberg and Manfred Max Neef to solving the herdsmen and farmers conflict in Benue State. In the present study both herdsmen and farmers are at the edge of fulfilling the first basic need which has been the bone of contention in the lingering conflict. Herdsmen move from place to place to provide pasture for their cattle which serve as a business for them and in a long run a source of food for Nigeria populace. This kind of nomadic life style makes them lose a sense of belonging, and motivate the craving for land ownership. On the process of herdsmen nomadic activities, they make use of crops planted by farmers to satisfy cattle which would have been used in first class human need satisfying by farmers, thereby stimulating conflict.

Maslow argues that every human being is trying to meet each level of these needs at a particular time, and only when the first needs in the pyramid is met, will people climb to meet the second need and continue to the final needs in the pyramid. From the perspective of Maslow theory, individuals or groups who are engaged in violence conflict should be addressed based on their own level of needs as found in the pyramid. The herdsmen have need for pasturing structure in order to feed their cattle.

Max-Neef (1991) proposed Human Scale Development based on the satisfaction of fundamental human needs on the generation of growing levels of self-reliance, and on the construction of organic articulations of people with nature and technology, of global processes with local activity, of civil society with the state. Max-Neef agrees with Burton and Rosenberg that no need is superior to the other, and that they are all complementary and essential to human life. However, the herdsmen need to be self-reliance in providing pasture to their flocks by adapting to the modern ways of rearing cattle and being contented to what they already have in the north, and not trying to have the whole farmland in Nigeria as their own. The herdsmen use their nomadic culture to deprive the farmers their farmland and crops. Human need theory made it clear that no need is more important than the other, and that they complement each other.

## **Conclusion**

Benue state has experienced a consistent and devastating violent conflict between the Fulani Pastoralists and farmers/indigenes of the land in the recent years. Many lives and properties have been wasted. This has been as a result of Herdsmen encroachment to personal space of the farmers, and cultural differences in live stocks grazing and values. The present research has identified that Fulani herdsmen have a need for grazing structure and identity in Nigeria, and through the human need theories, every human being has a need to satisfy. Fulani herdsmen have need for structure and identity, while farmers have need for security. Therefore, the government of Nigeria must look inwardly to helping both parties satisfy these pressing needs, and consider the cultural and ethnic differences that separate them.

### **Recommendation**

It is highly recommended by the present study that the federal government of Nigeria should provide the herdsmen a structure in Nigeria to satisfy their need for pasture without disrupting the farmers already established structures that satisfy their first class primary need. The researcher recommended that the federal government should carve out states for Fulani herdsmen in the north that support the Fulani pasturing culture and restrict them within the states in order to gain structure, identity and adopt the modern way of pasturing and to avoid using people's farm land for grazing. This will go a long way in settling the conflict between herdsmen and farmers. Eventually, the systematic approach will stop herdsmen attack to Benue State farmers/indigenes in Nigeria.

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DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=VAR00001 VAR00002 VAR00003 VAR00004 VAR00005  
 VAR00006 VAR00007 VAR00008 VAR00009 VAR00010 VAR00011 VAR00012  
 /STATISTICS=MEAN SUM STDDEV MIN MAX.

**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
VAR00001	80	1.00	6.00	369.00	4.6125	1.19592
VAR00002	80	1.00	4.00	158.00	1.9750	.81092
VAR00003	80	1.00	6.00	382.00	4.7750	1.12481
VAR00004	80	1.00	6.00	338.00	4.2250	1.16895
VAR00005	80	1.00	6.00	162.00	2.0250	.95434
VAR00006	80	1.00	6.00	202.00	2.5250	1.34987
VAR00007	80	2.00	6.00	360.00	4.5000	.96784
VAR00008	80	1.00	6.00	359.00	4.4875	.94123
VAR00009	80	1.00	6.00	359.00	4.4875	1.34064
VAR00010	80	1.00	6.00	400.00	5.0000	1.35011
VAR00011	80	1.00	5.00	195.00	2.4375	.99166
VAR00012	80	1.00	6.00	351.00	4.3875	1.41863
Valid N (listwise)	80					