

Original Paper

Assessing the Impact of Conflict Management Mechanisms on Indigenous Farmer-Fulani Cattle Herdsman Relations in Asante Akim North District

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Abstract - Population and settlement expansion in the Asante Akim North district have compelled indigenous farmers to move further into the interior for new farmlands. The new farming lands are disputed by Fulani cow herdsman and the crop farmers, resulting in the cost of conflict, regrettable as there are no established systems of conflict management to moderate this incidence in the district. The main objective of the study was to assess the effectiveness of conflict management mechanisms in the conflict between indigenous farmers and Fulani cattle herdsman. Qualitative method design was used in the research. Data were obtained from indigenous farmers using focus group discussions and from key informants using semi-structured interviews. Farmers and key informants concurred that the main factors of conflict in the district are crossing boundaries to ruin farms as well as rape or murder indigenous female farmers. Key informants and farmers explained that there is an ineffective conflict management method to deal with the ongoing conflict in the district. Therefore, the ineffective conflict management measures have deterred most of the farmers in the Asante Akim North district. This is because cattle continue to destroy crops in the district. Ranching ought to be initiated in the district to prevent the conflict between crop farmers and Fulani cattle herders. Further, all the actors and stakeholders must be included in the conflict management process to minimize conflict in the district.

Keywords - Conflict management, Indigenous farmers, Fulani herdsman, Conflict.

1. Introduction

Agrarian-pastoral conflict is another challenge that has remained prevalent in West Africa, with the most relevant scenarios being the disturbances between the indigenous and Fulani people in the Asante Akim North District of Ghana. The rivalry for access to land and water has been on the rise, and this has jeopardized the livelihoods and food security of vulnerable communities and threatened social cohesion. In Asante Akim North, this is an especially complicated conflict because the region is strategically located, there is abundant agricultural land, and population pressures continue to mount (Tofu & Wolka, 2023). Farmers blame Fulani herders for destroying crops and trespassing on farmlands, and the herders cite limited grazing areas and insecurity as reasons that they do this. These conflicts have led to destructive violence that has led to the loss of lives, property, as well as resentments fuelling the suspicion.



Agriculture and livestock rearing, according to Tofu and Wolka (2023), are at the center of economies of most of the less developed nations, especially in Africa. In West Africa, agriculture and livestock rearing, such as cattle keeping, have existed for centuries (Phillips, 2018). As a result of these human activities, the Fulani, who are primarily cattle herdsmen, move from one place to another in pursuit of pasture and water for their livestock (Oli et al., 2018). On the other hand, crop farmers who are locals in some parts of the country, like Asante Akim in Ghana, complain about farm destruction resulting from the Fulani and cattle. Conflict is the state of human beings that promotes competition over natural and artificial resources and group dynamics, leading to violence as a result of disagreement.

In the research, the disagreement that exists between Fulani cattle herdsmen and indigenous farmers has resulted in violence (Oli et al., 2018). The indigenous people differ from the Fulani cattle herdsmen because they use a different language, are of a different ethnic group and therefore have a different culture. Such conditions reveal that these different groups can easily be responsible for a conflict. The scarcity theory assists in explaining some of the propositions governing the conflict between the native farmers and the Fulani cattle herders. War cannot be avoided due to increased scarcity of natural resources such as agricultural lands and grazing lands caused by either increased demand or decreased supply (Tofu & Wolka, 2023).

Various ways of managing conflict, including state involvement and conventional dispute settlement processes, have been used to diffuse these tensions. Nonetheless, their efficiency is debatable. Some of the mechanisms have worked to de-escalate violence in the short term, whereas they have been ineffective because of ineffective application or, in some cases, not inclusive, in others, because of political manipulation. It is important to know more about the strengths and weaknesses of these mechanisms to find a way to achieve sustainable peace-building strategies.

The increasing number of people and expansion of settlements within the Asante Akim North district have compelled the local crop farmers to the hinterlands in search of new areas to cultivate (Mohammed et al, 2016). Unfortunately, the new areas are close to where the Fulani cattle herdsmen operate, where the lands are disputed. This competition for farmlands has generated conflict among Fulani cattle herdsmen and indigenous crop farmers in the district. The reason is that cattle trespass into farmlands and destroy crops cultivated by the indigenous farmers. Nevertheless, Bercovitch (2019) has explained that conflict management strategies employed by the government as well as the local authorities are not robust enough to bring to an end the conflict between the Fulani cattle herdsmen and the indigenous farmers.

This conflict, therefore, has generated fears and frustrations on the part of the indigenous farmers, especially (Olaniyan, 2015). This is because the conflict has jeopardized human security and food security in various parts of the study area, and the majority of the indigenous farmers, especially women, have been forced to abandon their farms for fear of being raped or for their lives. Adeoye (2017) researched land use conflict between crop farmers and cattle herdsmen in parts of Kano, Yobe and Borno States of Nigeria, but the attention was on the problems Fulani cattle herdsmen go through. Again, Olaniyan et al. (2015), in research conducted at Agogo, further researched to identify the actual owners of cattle, whether for Ghanaians or the Fulanis. This is because the Fulani are normally blamed for destructive activities in the area.

In spite of employing a number of conflict management strategies, such as government and local interventions, their overall effectiveness may not be very encouraging in the long term. Although the available research, such as that one of Adeoye (2017) and Olaniyan (2015), have been thorough in establishing the causes or effects of the conflict, there is a clear gap in terms of the availability of empirical research to evaluate whether the conflict management mechanism in this locale is sufficient or not. The existence of this disparity is a barrier to the formulation of sustainable peace-building measures adapted to the context of the socio-cultural and economic

factors of Asante Akim North. This study, therefore, endeavors to address this gap by examining the origin of the conflict and assessing the positive and negative aspects of the current conflict resolution initiatives to come up with more harmonized and all-inclusive solutions.

2. Literature Review

The agricultural-livestock conflict between local farmers in the Asante Akim North District and Fulani cattle farmers is the consequence of the agro-pastoral conflicts in the West African region, enhanced by environmental change, population change, and the lack of governance (Ejeh, 2022). A factor that has increased conflicts between herdsmen and farmers is the migration of Fulani herdsmen southward as a result of desertification. State intervention, local dialogues, and legal reforms are some of the mechanisms of conflict management, but given the circumstances, they are not very successful in managing the conflict. Conventional mediation through community elders has a problem with implementing it and maintaining impartiality. Cohabitative strategies, alternative to the above, like inclusive governance, are promising but suffer setbacks, lack coordination, finances, political influence, and credibility (Ajiye, 2020).

There have been frequent clashes between farmers and Fulani herdsmen in West Africa, especially in areas where there exists competition for the land, due to climate change, population growth and poor governance systems. Asante Akim North District in Ghana has been a place of unwelcome surprises as Fulani herdsmen's migration to agricultural societies has become an unpleasant thing to watch, and many times it leads to clashes. Such contests are not only resource contests, but also due to ethnic, cultural and political determinants (Ehiane et al., 2024).

A number of studies have considered the reasons as well as the dynamics of farmer-herder conflicts. As Ejeh (2022) puts it, the environmental deterioration and the failure of the traditional systems of conflict resolution have contributed to destabilizing existing symbiotic relations between the herders and farmers. The northward to southward migration of the herders due to desertification and decline in grazing land has, over time, enhanced land and water resources conflict, causing frequent arguments. Some of the instruments of conflict management in Ghana and Nigeria have involved state interventions, local dialogue forums and legal reforms. Nevertheless, some of them are effective. According to Ajiye (2020), numerous government policies are reactive and not preventive in nature, as they fail to have the institutional capacity to solve underlying issues. To take an example, security force deployment can stifle violence in the short run, but cannot achieve any long-term trust among the communities.

Some of these traditional mechanisms, including the mediation by the chiefs and the elders, prove to be promising in certain situations. The systems work through cultural legitimacy and local experience; hence, they are more palatable to the disputants (Erondu, 2021). However, they do not work well when the sides of the conflict include outsiders or when the traditional leaders are not neutral. Besides, its lack of formal means of enforcement may work to compromise its resolutions.

The collaborative approaches have obtained popularity over the past few years. Ohadiugha and Gado (2025) point out the significance of inclusive governance and stakeholder participation in conflict resolution. This undertaking on farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria shows the purposefulness of involving the farmers, herders, local governments, and civil society in participatory policy frameworks. These models enhance open communication, understanding, and collective decisions, which are qualities that are needed in a lasting peace. Nevertheless, not everything goes well. Most conflict management mechanisms have problems with poor coordination, a lack of appropriate funding, and interference with politics. Also, there is a dearth of accurate data and an early warning system to provide timely intervention.

According to Ajiye (2020), the weakening of trust between communities and state institutions also makes the issue more complicated when resolving conflicts. The success of any conflict management mechanisms as applicable in the case of Asante Akim North is based on the mechanism in question being able to treat the symptoms of a given conflict as well as the structural cause. These comprise a lack of security of tenure to land, poor application of grazing laws and inadequate access to justice. The combination of traditional and formal systems, improvement of community input, and institutional capacity would be significant in the process of settling the farmer-herder conflict.

Besides, the initial conceptual framework by Ahmadvand and Karami (2007) was not fully comprehensive in terms of all the concepts of conflicts that could be used for this study. The researcher modified the framework to include the parties of the conflict between Fulani cattle herdsmen and indigenous farmers, paying attention to causes, effects, and effective management mechanisms. The main parties in this conflict are indigenous farmers and Fulani cattle herdsmen, who suffer most of the adverse consequences.

Conflict management is fruitful only if everyone is on board, from indigenous farmers and Fulani cattle herdsmen to cattle owners, land owners, community leaders, government and non-governmental agencies, and legal authorities, and cooperates. Transparency, participation, and consensus lead to good decision-making and improved livelihood for everyone on board.

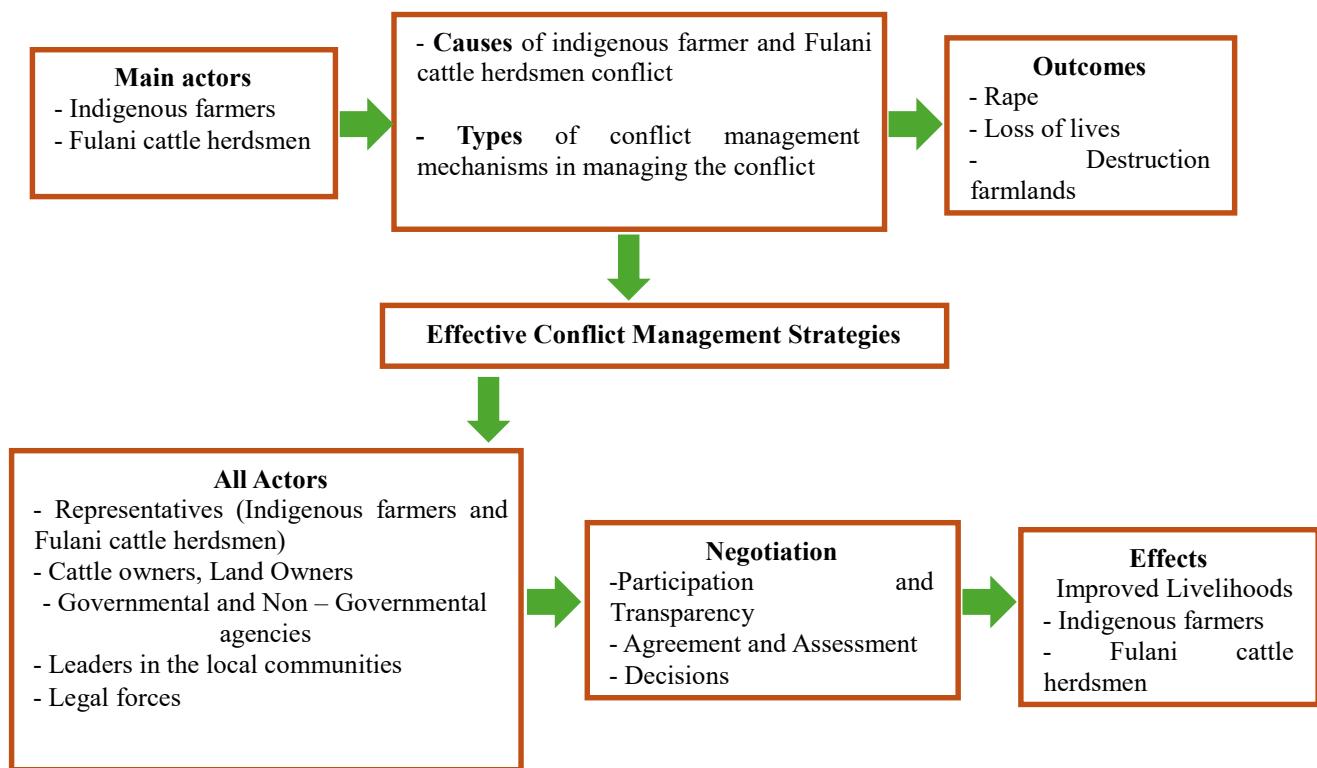


Fig. 1 Conceptual framework of causes of conflict and effective management strategies

Source: Adapted from Ahmadvand and Karami (2007)

3. Influence of Farmer-Herder Conflicts on Agricultural Productivity and Livelihoods

The consequences of farmer-herder conflict on both farming and livelihoods are wide and deep. These conflicts interfere with agricultural production, lower harvests and destabilize food security. According to Nnaji et al. (2022), farmer-herder conflicts enhance food insecurity among the rural households in Nigeria due to their incidence and

severity. The research also found that exposure to conflict undermines dietary diversity and multiplies the days households go without food.

There are similar patterns in Ghana, especially in the Agogo area. In another study by Sadiq et al. (2021), the researchers carried out a study in the middle belt region of Nigeria and revealed that people in conflict houses recorded massive losses on farm incomes because of invasions of farmlands. The magnitude of the income differentials between highly and less conflict-prone households was better realized in farm income, representing 79.3% than in non-farm income, which is 55.5%. That indicates that agricultural life is overrepresented as victims of conflict.

Muriuki et al. (2023) looked into the complementary consequences of conflict and climate change in Ethiopia and Malawi. Their results demonstrated that response to the conflict reduced the Food Consumption Score by 16.13 percent, and Malawi was subjected to harsher effects. The study highlights the confounding effects of conflict and environmental shocks that shake the foundation of households and dwindle agricultural yields.

Alhassan et al. (2024) determined the impacts of the conflict adaptation strategies on the multidimensional poverty and the subjective well-being in Ghana. They discovered that the households that used on-farm and non-farm strategies had much success in reducing poverty and enhancing well-being. Nevertheless, land accessibility, being close to grazing routes, and extension services had some effects on the use of these strategies.

On the whole, the literature establishes that farmer-herder conflicts do not only interfere with crop and animal production but also reinforce poverty and social exposure. Its economic impacts are drastic, and its effects will have lingering impacts on rural growth and national food security.

4. Policy Responses and Conflict Mitigation Strategies in Ghana

The policy solutions to crop farmer-cattle herder conflicts in Ghana have changed due to the changing nature and intensity of the instances of these conflicts. Traditionally, the state made use of security-oriented measures, such as Operation Cow leg, the focus of which was the removal of cattle herders from conflict-prone places. These initiatives mitigated tensions in the short-term, but were ineffective and accused of militarization and thereby failed to solve the causes of the conflict (Adomako, 2019).

Ghana has recently applied a more holistic approach, which is a National Framework for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism, that involves elements of prevention, pre-emption, protection, and response. This model is also an element of the country's general security policy and is in line with regional programs like the Accra Initiative or a collaboration system among states in West Africa that may respond to cross-border risks and radical terrorism (CSIS, 2023).

Ahmed (2022) points out that crop farmer-cattle herder relations in Ghana have been politicized by the lack of well-ordered land use regimes and discriminatory ways of accessing land. Ahmed (2022) has a view that land-use planning should be participatory, and livestock passes and grazing reserves should be established to eliminate competition for resources. Such measures would have to be coordinated between the local governments and ECOWAS member states to work out.

Locally, the measures that have been taken to mitigate the conflict include the introduction of a by-law to regulate the grazing and crop farming activities. Traditional authorities tend to enforce these laws, and they are important in the settlement of disputes. Nevertheless, they can be more or less effective in accordance with the presence of strong local institutions and the openness of decision-making processes. There has also been a boom in community-based approaches. The study by Bukari and Schareika (2015) established that the trusting and

construction of interpersonal relations, as well as the mitigation of negative tensions between crop farmers and cattle herders, was possible provided that the dialogue forums and common work on community projects took place. The most effective form of such efforts is through the partial facilitation of Non-Governmental Organisations and local governments that supply resources.

With all this, there are still issues. The conflict is worsened by climate change, population increase, illegal surface mining activities and ethnic conflicts. According to the CSIS report (2023), the stability of Ghana is becoming more precarious and active conflict prevention is the order of the day. It suggests external assistance and technical aid, which would enhance Ghana's conflict resolution capability and shock resistance to environmental crises. This has led to a transition of Ghana's policy responses with regard to security being changed into proactive and more participatory practices. Regardless of the advances that were necessary to stabilize the region, the future generations will demand long-term investment in governance of the land, involvement of the community and cooperation in the region.

5. Methods

The study utilized a qualitative study design to examine the phenomenon of clashes between Fulani cattle herdsmen and native farmers in Ghana's Asante Akim North district. The study aimed at exploring the phenomenon based on the subjective understanding of the respondents, not for generalization. The data was gathered via face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured interview guide with question flexibility. The district's population is 69,186, and it has a larger rural population than the urban sector population. Approximately 72.7 percent of the working population is engaged in agriculture, with crop farming taking the lion's share of agricultural activities.

The district is composed of rolling lowland and experiences a wet semi-equatorial type of climate with high temperatures all year round. The rainfall pattern is double maxima, and the annual total rainfall ranges from 1,250mm to 1,750mm. The district falls under the moist semi-deciduous forest belt, and the principal vegetation types are open forest, closed forest, and wood savannah. A total of 47 participants were chosen through a non-probability sampling technique comprising convenience sampling, purposive sampling, and snowball sampling. Data collection began following the agreement of the participants to take part in the study, and the interviews lasted from 13 to 30 minutes.

Data was collected through qualitative methods, including focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and direct observation. Secondary sources of data were documents of conflict between Fulani cattle herdsmen and indigenous farmers from the Police and the district assembly. Three conflict-prone communities, Agogo, Hwidiem, and Amantena, were sampled purposively to represent the Asante Akim North District. Snowball and purposive sampling techniques were used in the selection of the respondents since there are no records of indigenous farmers who have lost their crops and farmlands due to the conflict. The household was the main unit of analysis, and heads of households were the only ones interviewed.

Additionally, the research protocol was approved by the Departmental Research and Ethics Committee at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in line with the APA's 2020 ethical protocol. Informed consent was requested, participants were oriented, and confidentiality and anonymity were assured. Finally, the evidence collected was analyzed using the thematic analysis method. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis method was employed in analyzing the qualitative evidence. The steps involved familiarization with the data, coding data, generating themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming themes, and finally reporting.

6. Findings and Discussion

The results of this research are discussed in this section. Table 1 shows the communities under study and Table 2 shows the sex of the various respondents who have witnessed conflict issues in the study area.

Table 1. Background of respondents (communities under study)

Communities Under Study		
Study Area	Indigenous Farmers	Key Informants
Amantena	9	2
Hwidiem	13	3
Agogo	12	8
Total	34	13

Field survey (2017)

Table 1. Background of respondents (sex characteristics)

Sex Characteristics		
Sex	Indigenous Farmers	Key Informants
Males 19	19	12
Females 15	15	1
Total	34	13

Field survey (2017)

In Table 1, three towns were chosen for this research. They are Agogo, Hwidiem and Amantena. The majority of the affected indigenous farmers in Hwidiem responded to questions from various discussions, followed by Agogo and the least from Amantena. Agogo is the district capital, and the researcher expected to meet the majority of the affected indigenous farmers, but most of them were working on their farms.

Again, the majority of the key informants, such as the police, agricultural officers, traditional elders and assemblymen, were interviewed at Agoso. The majority of the government workers, including key informants, are stationed at the district capital. It is therefore no surprise that the researcher met the majority of the key informants at Agoso. On the other hand, some of the key informants were interviewed in Agogo since this is the least affected community in terms of conflict. Therefore, the researcher decided to interview more key informants in the most affected communities under investigation. The Table 2 also revealed that the majority of the respondents interviewed were males.

The affected indigenous farmers had slightly more male counterparts than the females. It was observed that the male indigenous farmers relatively enjoyed responding to questions compared to the female indigenous farmers. This is because their farm lands were larger than those of the female indigenous farmers. The majority of the male indigenous farmers also have the majority of their farms devastated. Again, the statistics by the police show that it is the male indigenous farmers who are allegedly being killed by Fulani cattle herdsmen. Therefore, the eagerness for establishing a lasting solution to this conflict between Fulani cattle herdsmen and indigenous farmers was very high. For the key informants, only one female was interviewed, whereas the rest were males. Ghana Statistical Service (2012) had confirmed that males are predominant when it comes to leadership and administration in Ghana. Hence, the information given in the researched communities was male-biased.

7. Causes of Conflict between the Indigenous Farmers and Fulani Cattle Herdsmen

Both indigenous farmers and the key informants clarified various reasons for the conflict between indigenous farmers and Fulani cattle herdsmen in the area of study. Among them are climate change, lack of defined boundaries and so on.

Repeated drought, as Fasona et al. (2016) and Olaniyan et al. (2015) have reported, has compelled the Fulani cattle herdsmen to move to the wet areas to settle their cattle in good pasture. This caused migration of the Fulani cattle herdsmen, whose cows have caused ethnic issues and conflicts. According to the explanation given by the indigenous crop farmers in the study communities, a few Fulani were first noticed in the mid-1980s. That is, they were brought in by some non-native farming population. To affirm the points under discussion, an aggrieved indigenous farmer wailed that:

The Fulani cattle herdsmen came from nowhere but posed no problems to our farms. But as their number increased, the animals started feeding on our crops (Male indigenous farmer at Agogo - field survey, 2017).

Disagreement between native peasants and the Fulani cow herders is likely to be severe one when boundaries are not well established and where there is illegal possession of farmlands (Fasona et al., 2016). Boundaries between fields of grazing and crops are not well designed, particularly in Agogo and Hwidiem. Thus, the major interviewees, including the police, traditional rulers, agricultural officers and to some extent the affected indigenous farmers, indicated that the cattle and the Fulani cattle keepers can easily invade farms and destroy basically all crops. Such crop destruction can be caused by trampling crops by cattle, grazing crops by cattle, or burning the bush by the Fulani cattle herdsmen, which spreads to local farms (Opoku, 2014). One of the male crop farmers at Agogo bemoaned that;

'I was sleeping in a hut in my farm at night when I saw many cattle moving through my farm. They ate and stamped on all the Yam I have harvested in the farm. My farm now looks like it has been abandoned because nothing is left in the farm' (Male indigenous farmer at Agogo - Field survey, 2017).

This kind of destruction also affects crop harvest output, thus causing food shortages. So when it was observed that the area had been experiencing some slow harvesting of crops between the years 2011 and 2015 (MOFA, 2014, cited in Asante Akim North District Assembly, n. d.), it was not surprising that something somewhere had not rendered any effective conflict management mechanisms in the district to curb such a menace.

Land shortage-Ignorance of the existence of farmers. Most of the female crop farmers in every village stated that they are not able to prevent the Fulani cattle herdsmen, who continue to destroy their farms. A female crop farmer at Agogo described that;

"abo be di dien?" ('What should the cattle feed on?') (Female indigenous farmer at Agogo - Field survey, 2017).

This means that Fulani cattle herdsmen believe that, because the cattle grazing ground is allowed to be exploited in cultivating crops, they will also allow the same crops to be cultivated to feed their cattle.

Poor or no payment of compensation is made to the injured farmers, even though the Fulani cattle herdsmen are held to be wealthier than the local farmers (Fasona et al., 2016). Most of the crop farmers, particularly in Amantena, described how the Fulani cattle herdsmen do not compensate properly after burning down the farmlands. Once they were caught with their cattle felling farms, in particular at Agogo and Hwidiem, the Fulani cattle herdsmen willingly took the blame but refused to pay a sufficient amount of compensation required by the local farmers. One of the female farmers narrated that:

'My maize farm was set ablaze by the Fulani cattle herdsmen but there was nothing like compensation because the Fulani cattle herdsmen were not seen. Even if seen, these Fulani cattle herders may kill or rape you' (Female indigenous farmer at Hwidiem - Field survey, 2017).

According to a robust argument by Chikaire et al. (2022), the conflict between indigenous farmers and Fulani cattle herdsmen is contributed to by poor enforcement of laws in the district. The key informants claim that the raping of some of the female crop farmers has been due to laxity of laws to check the internecine between crop farmers and Fulani cattle herdsmen. Even after incidents of sexual harassment, the Fulani cattle herdsmen, who are usually not identified by the indigenous female farmers, still prevail in the study communities.

Reports of the Agogo police command indicate that some of the women crop farmers are raped somewhere on their farms or in the bush by strange Fulani cattle herdsmen. Rape could be, at times, arrested by such rapists for a big price, either in money or a cow, as indicated by the indigenous farmers in the Agogo community. This has also forced some of the male indigenous farmers to deal with some of the suspected Fulani cattle herdsmen, causing lots of destructive conflicts.

Besides, weak implementation of the laws, as indicated by the key informants, has bestowed some kind of authority on the Fulani cattle men to continue to wreak havoc in the district. The Fulani cattle herdsmen usually dismantle their farms without the native farmers' notice, as they had decried earlier. The ones that are observed fail to pay the necessary compensation to affected farmers, or fail to pay in some cases. Such a case is already experiencing an upward surge since the cases reported to key informants are not addressed accordingly. Others among the assemblymen respondents who had alleged that;

"These Fulani cattle herdsmen and their owners are very rich and could sometimes influence the law enforcers to pass wrong judgement" (Key informant, 2017)

It could be accurate that most indigenous farmers have given up the urge to report cases of conflicts between them and the Fulani cattle herdsmen to authorities, due to the fact that the majority of their reported complaints to the key informants have not been handled appropriately. The weak law enforcement scenario that has been developed based on key informants is also politically slanted because the key informants, particularly the assemblymen, confirmed that some of the cattle in the district are owned by some ministers and some members of parliament.

Once more, there are cases when indigenous farmers are murdered on their farms, and criminals may not be punished due to the poor law enforcement system in the area of the study. Indeed, statistics that were obtained at the Agogo Police command revealed that several native farmers had been murdered on their farms. According to the figures, there have been the assassinations of in excess of 25 native farmers within 7 years. The majority of these murdered crop farmers are males, as indicated. Agogo have registered lots of cases of killing of indigenous farmers on their farms. The reason is that these murdered crop farmers expressed the desire to save their farms, which were being destroyed by cattle, but they were killed. Different farmers who cultivated crops also died when they helped their fellow crop farmers to confront these Fulani cattle farmers. A Fulani cattle herdsmen representative who was interviewed expressed that;

'The cattle are our source of livelihood. The indigenous farmers hit our cattle with sticks and, at times, kill them. We will never destroy their farms deliberately. Some unknown Fulani cattle herdsmen amongst us may destroy farms, especially in the night. We should understand that in every society, there are deviants. But these farmers think we are the same people, but that is not the case. We have to protect our animals and our lives' (Fulani cattle representative, 2017).

This situation, as explained by both Fulani cattle herdsmen and the indigenous farmers, is a clear indication that they blame each other for the conflict. Yet, laws to manage such conflict in the district are relatively weak.

8. Types of Conflict Management Mechanisms in Managing the Conflict between Indigenous Farmers and Fulani Cattle Herdsmen

In the present paper, three different areas were identified where one or another instrument was employed to regulate the conflict between indigenous farmers and Fulani cattle herdsmen in the conflict regions. The identified zones were based on the community, the district and the national levels. Local control of conflict in the local community is done by traditional rulers like the chiefs, the queen mothers, the elders of the town, and sometimes the assemblymen, who are involved in such an occurrence between the indigenous farmers and the Fulani cattle herdsmen. According to Ezeamama and Okolie (2022), most of the time, the Fulani cattle herdsmen fail to comprehend how the host communities traditionally hold and own lands. In the study regions, traditional leaders might not exercise unlimited powers to cede arrangements for selling land to Fulani cattle herders to graze. The reason behind this is that, besides the traditional leaders owning lands in the district, the government, companies, families and individuals are in possession of some of the lands. The right land owners thereafter express violent objections to the landowners about the given lands to the cattle herdsmen of the Fulani, leading to war (Usman & Tar, 2023).

The conflict management system at the community level is losing credibility as the indigenous farmers are considered to be being betrayed by their own chiefs as well as leaders of the communities. Therefore, such a mechanism of conflict management is poor at the community level. One Agogo farmer was telling the story as follows:

'The Fulani cattle herdsmen here have bought the conscience of our traditional leaders. They give them money and cattle, but we farmers have nothing to give. Our elders are now corrupt, so we do not trust them anymore'
(Female farmer at Agogo, survey, 2017).

This also shows that even indigenous farmers lack trust on their own leaders, down to the community members, since they are accused of the allegations. Thus, at the community level, conflict between indigenous farmers and Fulani cattle herdsmen cannot be tackled by the traditional leaders.

Certain security organs, such as police on the district level, do not exercise lawfully in spite of the fact that they are mandated by the nation to enforce laws. This renders the enforcement of laws regulating the conflict weak at the district level. Take an example, some key informants, such as the assemblymen and the affected indigenous farmers, claimed that the district police accept at least one cow annually just to safeguard the Fulani cattle herdsmen. Not to wonder that one of the farmers at Amantena explained that;

'If you report your issues to the police concerning any farm destruction, they advise you to relocate to another place to farm' (Female farmer at Amantena, 2017).

This is a pointer to the extent that some of the law enforcers collude with some of the Fulani cattle herdsmen or the local farmers so as to make a case against them useless. Such a conflict management competency can never be effective, as the presence of corrupt people within the government will incline them to support one side of the conflict. Once again, the district court has made some judgments in a bid to ensure that the conflict is contained, but there is still much to be improved.

In this example, a jail sentence could have been given to either perpetrator of the crime, but that would not have put an end to the conflict. The reason behind this is that Fulani cattle herdsmen are yet to share space in which they can operate with the indigenous farmers (Ehiane et al., 2024). There are also other offenders on both Sides who have paid several fines. In recent times, the court has already decided to oust the Fulani cattle herdsmen from the regions that are affected, but there is no political will to put such laws into effect.

Such mechanisms of conflict management at the district level appear problematic. This is as a result of the fact that women farmers are being raped, either by Fulani cattle herdsmen or the farmers are still being killed, cattle continue to destroy crops belonging to the indigenous farmers and so on in the district. Ejeh (2022) says that some of the past ruling governments at the national level did not have the political will to address the conflict between the indigenous farmers and Fulani cattle herdsmen. This could happen because other people in government and those of high standing in Ghana also own some cattle to be taken care of by the same Fulani in the infested categories. It is thus hard to do something against oneself, although one knows about the war. The exalted appetite of the Ghanaians for beef did not decline. Thus, the price of cattle products in the country doubled. The government later introduced the Burkina Faso cattle, which also influenced the balance of the trade in Ghana. That is an indication that the problem that is being solved by the government has created another complex problem, which affects a chain of traders in the cattle business.

In this way, the shoe production industry was affected, as were butchers and even leather sellers. A mechanism of conflict management was also initiated by the government of Ghana in 2017. Corrupt leaders and warlords were introduced in an effort to deal with the war, which was aimed at benefiting them to the extent of inventing a name, Operation Cow Leg. This has been initiated since the so-called Fulani cattle herdsmen began to wage war on farming communities. The agencies of law enforcers, such as the police and the special forces in the military, were commanded to shoot down and kill the cattle found in the affected regions. Still, many of the cattle were actually killed and the Fulani herdsmen, who used to always hide in the bush and among their cattle, shot and wounded many of the security men. Just under two months after the operation, the forces were recalled due to complaints made by the opposition parties and the general populace.

All these sorts of machinery at the national level resulted in another complex problem in the affected areas. This contributed to the development of tension between the communities in such affected regions. The government has once again resorted to ranching as a way of controlling the Fulani cattle head herders and the clash between them and the indigenous farmers. This has not yet been put into practice; hence, conflict in troubled territories is still prevailing and increasing. As much as this was true to a certain degree, the governments were keen on preserving crop cultivation, but forgot that the Fulani cattle herdsmen are equally very significant to the development of the nation. The indigenous farmers enjoy mechanisms such as the use of law enforcement agencies to control the menace, but this has caused other ills in the country. This is done through crop growing and animal keeping, according to Rubenstein (2011), as it is crucial in society. This can be explained by the fact that in Ghana, at least 50 percent of the population earns an income through farming (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021).

9. Limitations of the Study

As with any qualitative study, even though this study did make some promising findings, it is not possible to eliminate the possibility of the participants being prejudiced by the researcher's presence. Subsequent studies should therefore take conscious steps to prevent such prejudices from influencing the respondents. In addition, the research collected data from farmers and one Fulani herdsman on the under-study threat, and therefore, future research should go beyond just the farmers to capture all the herdsmen to make the research an inclusive one.

10. Recommendations

According to the findings of this study, drought is one of the major causes of why some of these Fulani herdsmen migrate. The government can, therefore, implement policies like the building of dams in order to conserve water that can be used during the dry season. Or, there may be the creation of grassland reserves or a ranch where these herdsmen can take their cattle to graze. This will prevent the cattle from trespassing on these local farmers' farms. The crop farmers and Fulani herders should be involved in the management of the conflict at the local, district and national levels to ensure participation and transparency in the district. As part of the conflict management in the district, crop farmers should therefore be compensated fully because the majority of them do

not receive any compensation after their crop farms are destroyed by the Fulani cattle herders. The final suggestion has to do with the issue of security. Given that there have been reports of rape and immoral behavior from some of these herdsmen, the presence of law enforcement officers needs to be everywhere in some of these communities to prevent any threat to national security.

11. Conclusion

The farmers-Fulani herdsmen conflict is a recurring conflict that has been ongoing for a long time. One whose resolution cannot be negotiable is devising a solution that will last. Organizations whose responsibility is to stop this tension, therefore, have to act with some level of speed to prevent the situation from escalating and getting out of hand, which in turn can have dire consequences.

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