



## EDUCATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF FARMER/HERDERS CLASHES ON PRIMARY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN OGBADIBO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE

By

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### Abstract

*This study investigated the educational consequences of farmer/herder clashes on primary school enrollment and infrastructural development in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. The persistent violent conflict between nomadic herders and local farming communities has led to widespread insecurity, displacement, and disruption of essential services, particularly education. Adopting a descriptive survey research design, the study sampled 100 primary school teachers and head teachers from conflict-affected schools using a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected through a validated questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests. Findings revealed that the farmer/herder clashes have significantly reduced primary school enrollment due to parental fear, displacement of families, and increased absenteeism. The study also showed that school infrastructure has suffered extensive damage, including the destruction of buildings, vandalization of learning facilities, and overcrowding due to displaced pupils. Chi-square analyses confirmed a statistically significant relationship between the farmer/herder conflict and both school enrollment and infrastructural development ( $p = 0.000$ ). These findings highlight the deepening educational crisis in conflict-affected communities and underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions. The study recommends immediate reconstruction of damaged schools, deployment of security measures, introduction of mobile learning programs for displaced children, trauma support for learners and teachers, and integration of conflict-sensitive planning in educational policy. Addressing these issues is critical to restoring safe, inclusive, and resilient educational systems in rural areas affected by violence.*

**Keywords:** Farmer/herder conflict, primary education, school enrollment, infrastructure.

### Background to the Study

Education is universally recognized as a fundamental human right and a catalyst for socio-economic development. In Nigeria, primary education plays a pivotal role in laying the foundation for literacy, numeracy, and civic responsibility among young learners. However, in recent years, the delivery of primary education in many parts of the country has come under threat due to escalating conflicts between nomadic herders and sedentary farming communities. These violent clashes, often centered on land ownership, grazing routes, and dwindling natural resources, have become a common feature of life in Nigeria's Middle Belt region, particularly in Benue State (Okoli & Atelhe, 2020).

Benue State, nicknamed the "Food Basket of the Nation," is home to many farming communities whose livelihood depends heavily on agricultural activities. However, as climate change, population pressure, and resource scarcity continue to intensify, competition for arable land and water has deepened the friction between farmers and Fulani herders, who migrate seasonally in search of pasture for their livestock (UNDP, 2022). These clashes have often escalated into full-blown violence, resulting in the loss of lives, destruction of farmlands, burning of villages, and displacement of thousands of people.

Dzeka and Iorfa (2016) traced the history of violence between pastoralist and farmers to the beginning of



agriculture, nothing however that the incidence of clashes was at low frequency because of the prevalence of tsetsefly and low settlement densities until the twentieth century when the use of veterinary drugs increased herd size just as improved human health increased overall human population and ecological changed, therefore the increased herd size and population have led to pressure on arable land and conflict become inevitable.

One of the critical but often overlooked consequences of these conflicts is the disruption of the educational system. In conflict-affected communities such as Ogbadibo Local Government Area, schools have become targets and victims of attacks, leading to their destruction or abandonment. Pupils, teachers, and educational administrators have been forced to flee for safety, leading to prolonged school closures and interrupted learning processes. In many cases, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps are set up in school premises, further displacing educational activities. These developments undermine the Universal Basic Education (UBE) goals and compromise the quality and accessibility of primary education in affected areas (UNESCO, 2023).

Furthermore, the destruction of school infrastructure such as classrooms, libraries, sanitation facilities, and teaching materials erodes the learning environment, making it difficult for students to return to school even after peace is restored. Parents are often reluctant to send their children back to school in insecure areas, especially girls, who are more vulnerable to gender-based violence during crises. As a result, school enrollment declines significantly, leading to an increase in out-of-school children, a problem already endemic in Nigeria (Udeh, Eze, & Joseph, 2023).

The implications of these disruptions are far-reaching. Children who miss out on early education are more likely to suffer from long-term academic underachievement, poor life outcomes, and socio-economic marginalization. Moreover, a society where education is consistently disrupted by violence cannot achieve sustainable development, peace, or security. While several studies have addressed the broad impact of insecurity on education in Nigeria, there is a paucity of localized, empirical studies that focus on the specific consequences of farmer/herder clashes on school enrollment and infrastructure in rural areas such as Ogbadibo.

Given the increasing frequency and intensity of these clashes, and the strategic role of primary education in national development, it becomes imperative to examine the educational consequences of these conflicts. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate how the farmer/herder crisis has affected primary school enrollment and infrastructural development in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State, with the aim of providing data-driven recommendations for policy and intervention.

## Statement of the Problem

The farmer/herder crisis in Nigeria has evolved into a recurring security emergency, particularly in rural agrarian states such as Benue. Once considered isolated disputes over

land or cattle, the conflict has taken on a more violent and complex dimension, involving destruction of farmlands, loss of lives, and mass displacement of communities. Ogbadibo Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State, which traditionally relies on subsistence farming, has become increasingly vulnerable to such attacks, especially in villages located near grazing routes. These violent encounters have had significant implications for all aspects of community life — from agriculture and health to security and education.

Primary education, which serves as the bedrock of national development and social stability, is one of the sectors most adversely affected by this crisis. There are numerous reports of primary schools in Ogbadibo being vandalized, looted, burned, or outright abandoned due to recurrent attacks by herdsmen (Audu & Egwemi, 2022). Teachers and pupils have been forced to flee their communities, resulting in prolonged school closures and disrupted academic calendars. In some cases, school buildings have been converted into makeshift shelters for internally displaced persons (IDPs), further compounding the deterioration of the learning environment.

As a result of these disruptions, school enrollment rates have sharply declined. Parents, fearing for the safety of their children, especially girls, often withdraw them from school. Others migrate to safer areas without access to educational facilities. This displacement creates a generation of children who miss out on critical years of foundational learning, exacerbating the problem of out-of-school children in Nigeria — a country that already has the highest number globally (UNESCO, 2023). The psychological trauma caused by violence, coupled with the destruction of physical infrastructure, also negatively affects students' ability to learn and teachers' willingness to remain in these communities.

Despite the growing concern over the consequences of farmer/herder conflicts on education, there remains a noticeable gap in empirical data and academic research focused specifically on Ogbadibo LGA. Most available studies have concentrated on broader national or state-level analyses, leaving local-level impacts under-researched. Consequently, policy responses are often generic, lacking the contextual sensitivity needed to address the unique challenges facing primary schools in conflict-affected areas like Ogbadibo.

The absence of reliable local data on how these violent conflicts affect both school enrollment and infrastructure limits the ability of educational planners, government officials, and humanitarian agencies to formulate targeted interventions. There is, therefore, an urgent need for an empirical investigation into the educational consequences of farmer/herder clashes in Ogbadibo LGA, focusing particularly on enrollment trends and infrastructural decline. This study aims to fill that critical knowledge gap and provide evidence-based recommendations for restoring and protecting education in conflict-prone communities.

## Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the educational consequences of farmer/herder clashes on primary education in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Investigate the impact of farmer/herder clashes on primary school enrollment in Ogbadibo LGA.
2. Examine the extent to which these clashes affect infrastructural development in primary schools within the affected communities.

### Research Questions

1. What is the effect of farmer/herder clashes on primary school enrollment in Ogbadibo LGA?
2. To what extent have these clashes affected infrastructural development in primary schools in Ogbadibo LGA?

### Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between farmer/herder clashes and primary school enrollment in Ogbadibo LGA.
2. Farmer/herder clashes have no significant effect on infrastructural development in primary schools in Ogbadibo LGA.

### Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the educational consequences of farmer/herder clashes on primary school enrollment and infrastructural development in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State. The descriptive survey design was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect, describe, and analyze data from a defined population in order to understand prevailing educational conditions and challenges arising from conflict situations, without manipulating any variables.

The population of the study comprised all primary school teachers and head teachers in public primary schools across Ogbadibo LGA, particularly those working in communities affected by farmer/herder clashes. These individuals were chosen as they are directly involved in managing teaching and

learning in schools impacted by insecurity and are therefore well-positioned to provide relevant insights into changes in enrollment and infrastructure.

A sample size of 100 respondents was selected from public primary schools within the LGA using a simple random sampling technique to ensure fair and unbiased representation across affected communities. The sample included 85 teachers and 15 head teachers from schools known to have experienced direct or indirect effects of the conflicts. This sample size was considered adequate to provide meaningful generalizations regarding the educational impacts of the farmer/herder crisis within acceptable statistical margins.

The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Educational consequences of Farmer/herders clashes Questionnaire" (FHCPEQ). The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A focused on demographic information of the respondents (e.g., age, years of teaching experience, school location), while Section B included items that measured the extent of the impact of the conflicts on school enrollment and infrastructure. The items were developed by the researcher based on literature and field observations and were subjected to expert validation by professionals in educational planning and conflict studies at a public university in Benue State.

Data were collected through direct administration of the questionnaires to the respondents during school hours, following approval from the Benue State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and local school authorities. This method ensured a high response rate and allowed the researcher to offer real-time clarification of any unclear questions to the respondents.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. In addition, independent sample t-tests were employed to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. All data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 to ensure accuracy and reliability of results.

## RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** What is the effect of farmer/herder clashes on primary school enrollment in Ogbadibo LGA?

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard Deviation on effect of farmer/herder clashes on primary school enrollment in Ogbadibo LGA

S/NO	Items Description	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	S.D	Decision
1	Farmer/herder clashes have caused many pupils to withdraw from school.	41	33	17	9	3.06	.973	Accepted
2	Parents are afraid to send their children to school due to insecurity.	39	32	19	10	2.93	.977	Accepted
3	School enrollment has declined significantly since the clashes began.	44	24	20	12	3.00	1.064	Accepted

4	Children from displaced families no longer attend school in this community.	50	26	16	6	3.22	.927	Accepted
5	Insecurity has increased school absenteeism among pupils.	46	28	12	14	3.06	1.071	Accepted
<b>Cluster mean</b>						<b>3.05</b>	<b>1.002</b>	

The findings from Table 1 reveal that farmer/herder clashes have significantly impacted primary school enrollment in Ogbadibo Local Government Area. Respondents strongly agreed that these violent conflicts have led to the withdrawal of pupils from school, largely due to insecurity and displacement. Specifically, a mean score of 3.06 indicated that many pupils have stopped attending school following violent outbreaks. Another notable observation, with a mean of 3.22—the highest on the table—shows that children from displaced families no longer attend schools in their original communities. Parents' fear for their children's safety (mean = 2.93), increased absenteeism (mean = 3.06), and overall enrollment decline (mean = 3.00) further support the assertion

that the learning environment has been severely destabilized. The cluster mean of 3.05 confirms a general consensus among respondents that the conflict has disrupted regular schooling. The implication of this finding is far-reaching, as it suggests a growing educational crisis in the area. Sustained conflict has created a generation of out-of-school children, compounding Nigeria's existing enrollment challenges and threatening the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent have these clashes affected infrastructural development in primary schools in Ogbadibo LGA?

**Table 2:** Mean and Standard Deviation on extent have these clashes affected infrastructural development in primary schools in Ogbadibo LGA

S/NO	Items Description	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	S.D	Decision
1	School buildings have been damaged or destroyed due to farmer/herder violence.	41	33	17	9	3.06	.973	Accepted
2	Classrooms are now overcrowded due to displacement of pupils from other communities.	39	32	19	10	2.93	.977	Accepted
3	Facilities such as toilets, desks, and teaching materials have been vandalized or stolen.	44	24	20	12	3.00	1.064	Accepted
4	Many schools lack perimeter fencing, making them vulnerable to attacks.	50	26	16	6	3.22	.927	Accepted
5	Government has made little effort to rehabilitate schools damaged during the clashes.	46	28	12	14	3.06	1.071	Accepted
<b>Cluster mean</b>						<b>3.05</b>	<b>1.002</b>	

Table 2 illustrates the damaging effects of farmer/herder clashes on the physical infrastructure of primary schools in Ogbadibo LGA. All items assessed received high agreement, with mean scores ranging from 2.93 to 3.22, and a cluster mean of 3.05. Respondents agreed that school buildings have been destroyed or damaged during violent attacks (mean = 3.06), and many reported that classrooms have become overcrowded due to the displacement of pupils from other conflict-affected areas (mean = 2.93). Furthermore, essential facilities such as desks, toilets, and teaching materials have been looted or vandalized (mean = 3.00), while the lack of perimeter fencing (mean = 3.22) has rendered schools more vulnerable to further attacks. The findings also revealed dissatisfaction with the government's response to rehabilitating affected infrastructure, as indicated by a mean score of 3.06. These results suggest that the conflict has not

only driven learners away from school but has also severely compromised the physical conditions needed for effective teaching and learning. The implication is that even when pupils return, the absence of functional infrastructure continues to undermine educational quality, attendance, and retention, especially in vulnerable rural communities.

## Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between farmer/herder clashes and primary school enrollment in Ogbadibo LGA.

**Table 3:** Chi-Square Analysis on the relationship between farmer/herder clashes and primary school enrollment in Ogbadibo LGA.

Responses	fo	Fe	Df	$\chi^2$	P	Remark
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Strongly Disagree	10	25.0				
Disagree	17	25.0				
Agree	29	25.0	3	26.6 40 <sup>a</sup>	.000	Significant
Strongly Agree	44	25.0				
<b>Total</b>	100					

Table 3 shows a significant chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 26.640$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), indicating a strong statistical relationship between farmer/herder clashes and primary school enrollment in Ogbadibo LGA. The null hypothesis is rejected. This means that the decline in school enrollment is directly linked to the ongoing conflict, confirming that insecurity and displacement are major factors disrupting children's education.

**Hypothesis 2:** Farmer/herder clashes have no significant effect on infrastructural development in primary schools in Ogbadibo LGA

**Table 4:** Chi-Square Analysis on the effect on infrastructural development in primary schools in Ogbadibo LGA

Responses	fo	Fe	D f	$\chi^2$	P	Remark
Strongly Disagree	10	25.0				
Disagree	17	25.0				
Agree	29	25.0	3	26.6 40 <sup>a</sup>	.00 0	Significant
Strongly Agree	44	25.0				
<b>Total</b>	100					

In Table 4, the chi-square result ( $\chi^2 = 26.640$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) also indicates a significant effect of the clashes on school infrastructure. The null hypothesis is rejected. This confirms that the violent conflict has seriously damaged school facilities and hindered infrastructural development, necessitating urgent reconstruction and protective interventions.

## Discussion of Findings

The findings from the study clearly reveal that farmer/herder clashes have had a significant negative impact on primary school enrollment in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State. This is evident from the high mean responses in Table 1, where respondents affirmed that conflict-related insecurity has led to pupil withdrawals, absenteeism, and total non-enrollment, particularly among displaced children. The cluster mean of 3.05 indicates strong agreement that school enrollment has declined due to these violent incidents. This outcome aligns with Udeh, Eze, and Joseph (2023), who observed that education in conflict-prone regions suffers

major setbacks as displaced families are unable to enroll or maintain their children in school. Similarly, UNESCO (2023) reports that fear of violence discourages parents from allowing their children—especially girls—to attend school, contributing to Nigeria's already high number of out-of-school children. The chi-square test further strengthens this observation by establishing a statistically significant relationship between the conflict and declining school enrollment ( $p = 0.000$ ). This finding suggests that beyond the immediate threat to safety, violent clashes undermine long-term educational attainment in affected communities. It highlights the urgent need for education-in-emergency policies that prioritize mobile learning, psychosocial support for displaced learners, and the reintegration of affected children into safe educational environments.

The study also finds that infrastructural development in primary schools has been severely hindered by farmer/herder clashes. Table 2 shows that respondents consistently agreed that school buildings have been destroyed, classrooms overcrowded, and facilities vandalized. The mean score of 3.22 for lack of fencing underscores the vulnerability of schools to further attacks, while the response to poor government rehabilitation efforts (mean = 3.06) reflects dissatisfaction with post-conflict recovery measures. These results are supported by findings from the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA, 2022), which documented widespread destruction of school facilities in conflict-affected Nigerian communities. Similarly, Audu and Egwemi (2022) noted that the violent intrusion of herders into rural communities often results in the repurposing of schools as shelters for displaced persons, rendering them unfit for learning. The statistical test in Table 4 confirms a significant effect of conflict on infrastructure, rejecting the null hypothesis ( $p = 0.000$ ). Without urgent investment in rebuilding, fencing, and equipping schools in these areas, even willing learners and teachers will lack a conducive environment for teaching and learning. This jeopardizes not only educational quality but also community recovery and social stability in post-conflict zones.

## Conclusion

This study examined the educational consequences of farmer/herder clashes on primary school enrollment and infrastructural development in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State. The findings revealed that the persistent violence has led to a significant decline in primary school enrollment due to displacement, insecurity, and fear among parents and pupils. Additionally, the study established that the conflict has resulted in the destruction and deterioration of school infrastructure, including classrooms, desks, toilets, and other essential facilities, while government efforts at reconstruction have been limited or ineffective.

Statistical analysis confirmed that there is a significant relationship between the farmer/herder crisis and the decline in school enrollment, as well as a significant negative effect on school infrastructure. These findings align with existing literature and emphasize the devastating impact of armed

conflict on educational access and quality in rural communities. The study concludes that unless urgent interventions are put in place, the educational system in conflict-affected areas like Ogbadibo may continue to deteriorate, denying children their fundamental right to education and undermining long-term development goals.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Government at all levels, in collaboration with NGOs and international agencies, should prioritize the reconstruction of destroyed schools, including the provision of learning materials, toilets, desks, and perimeter fencing to ensure safety and functionality.
2. Schools in conflict-prone areas should be provided with security personnel or community-based surveillance systems to prevent further attacks and reassure parents and teachers of their safety.
3. The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with SUBEB, should introduce mobile schools, temporary learning centers, and inclusive education programs for displaced children who have been cut off from formal schooling due to the conflict.
4. Specialized training and counseling services should be offered to help learners and educators cope with trauma resulting from the conflict, ensuring emotional stability and learning readiness.
5. Education authorities should integrate conflict-sensitive planning into educational policy and infrastructure development. This includes identifying high-risk areas, planning for educational continuity during crises, and incorporating peace education into the curriculum.
6. There should be a deliberate effort to engage community leaders, parents, and youth in peacebuilding programs to reduce hostilities and promote coexistence, thereby creating a safer environment for education.

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