



Farmers-Herders' Conflict and Its Impact on Health and Educational Well-being of Women in Plateau State, Nigeria



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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

The persistent conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria, in general and Plateau State in particular, has evolved into a major security and humanitarian crisis with profound socio-economic consequences. Women, who are central to agricultural production, household welfare, and community stability, have become the most affected group due to their limited access to resources, increased exposure to violence and loss of economic and social opportunities. Thus, this study examines the impact of farmers-herders' conflict on the health and educational well-being of women in six conflict-affected Local Government Areas in Plateau State. They included Barkin Ladi, Bassa, Bokkos, Mangu, Riyom, and Wase. The study was anchored on Human Capital Theory, which emphasizes investment in education, health and skills as key drivers of productivity, wellbeing and sustainable development. This study adopted a descriptive survey research design in the collection and analysis of data using a structured questionnaire. A total of 384 responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple regression analysis. The findings revealed that farmers-herders' conflict significantly undermines women's health, leading to malnutrition, restricted access to healthcare services, psychological trauma, heightened exposure to infectious diseases, and increased maternal health risks among women. More so, it was made obvious that the conflict leads to a diminished teaching workforce, destruction and closure of schools, increased dropout rates among women, and erodes access to quality education. Therefore, the conflict between farmers and herders diminishes the health and educational well-being of women. The study recommends, among others, that the government and humanitarian agencies (NGOs) should prioritize the establishment of mobile healthcare services in conflict-prone areas and vocational training centres for women and girls for skills acquisition.

CITATION

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INTRODUCTION

Farmers-herders' conflicts usually occur between peasant farmers or subsistence cultivators and nomadic or transhumant livestock keepers (Okoro, 2018). They are simply disputes between farmers and herders over farmland or grazing lands. Today, it is disheartening to note that conflict between farmers and herders has become one of the persistent security threats to rural

development worldwide. This is so because pastoral lifestyles are not unique to Africa or Nigeria alone. They also exist in South America, particularly in Bolivia and Peru, among the Andean herders of Llamas and Alpacas (Akerjiir, 2018), as well as in other parts of the world. In Africa, in general and West Africa in particular, farmers and herders' conflicts have become a common feature of economic livelihood (Tonah, 2006). In Nigeria, particularly

in the North-Central region where Plateau State is located, the conflict between farmers and herders has become violent and one of the most persistent security threats to rural livelihood. According to Ojo and Adebayo (2022), Olanrewaju and Balana (2023), the origins of this conflict lie in the increasing scarcity of vital economic resources such as land, water and forest areas. This is caused by climate change, desertification, and rising population pressure.

Historically, relations between farmers and herders were harmonious. By and large, they lived in a peaceful symbiotic relationship: herders' cattle would fertilize the farmers' lands in exchange for grazing rights (International Crisis Group, 2017). Today, however, the relationship has been marred by frequent violent clashes. This could be as a result of climate change culminating to droughts, desertification, and changing weather patterns which forces herders to migrate to new areas, leading to competition over grazing and farming land. In addition, the Middle Belt geopolitics and presence of armed groups further escalates the conflict. Supporting this, the International Crisis Group (2017) and Musa (2023) opine that this fragile coexistence has deteriorated due to competition over dwindling ecological resources, weak governance, and the collapse of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. The migration of nomadic herders from the arid northern zones into the more fertile North-Central region, including Plateau State, has exacerbated this crisis. As herders move southward in search of pasture and water, their animals often encroach on farmlands, leading to retaliatory attacks by the farmers. This dynamic conflict has led to recurring cycles of violence, marked by killings, destruction of farmlands, and mass displacement (Search for Common Ground, 2018; Kwaja & Ademola, 2021). Plateau State, which was once known to be the 'Home of Peace and Tourism', has suffered the menace of this dimension of conflict since the return to democratic rule in 1999, owing to its ethnic and religious diversity and its location along migration corridors. Thus, it has become a hotspot for such clashes. In fact, according to the West African Network for Peacebuilding (2021) and Gyang (2022), from 2018 to 2022, hundreds of people were killed, and tens of thousands were displaced across local governments like Bokokos, Barkin Ladi, Mangu and Riyom.

The human cost of this conflict (farmers-herders conflict) is disproportionately borne by women and children. As primary caregivers and economic contributors, especially on the Plateau, women face increased burdens when conflict disrupts family structures, healthcare access, and livelihood systems. Displacement into internally displaced persons (IDP) camps or overcrowded host communities often means that women must survive without access to adequate food, clean water, or reproductive health services (Henry et al, 2022). According

to Onah (2017) and Yusuf (2023), maternal health is particularly endangered in these settings, where antenatal and postnatal care is virtually non-existent, and women are vulnerable to gender-based violence, trauma and poor sanitation. In addition, women and their female children who were hitherto disadvantaged educationally in the northern part of the country are affected the most as schools are often closed, destroyed or abandoned. More so, the fear of attacks discourages school attendance, especially for girls. Many children are pushed into child labour or early marriage, compromising their right to education and long-term development (Ishaku et al, 2024; UNICEF, 2023).

Despite various interventions by the Plateau State Government, including the establishment of the Plateau Peace Building Agency, Operation Rainbow (a security agency), constant dialogues between farmers and herders, a community-based early warning system, etc., these conflicts continue to escalate, often with little or no accountability for perpetrators (Kuna & Ibrahim, 2021). For instance, in August 2021 alone, Plateau State recorded 122 deaths related to violent attacks, contributing to a national total of 693 fatalities in a single month (WANEP, 2021). Also, according to Amnesty International (2024), just between December 2023 and February 2024, 1336 people were killed in Mangu, Bokokos and Barkin Ladi Local Government areas of Plateau State. Whereas 29,554 people were displaced from their homes, including 13,093 children and 16,461 women. This report reveals that women are highly affected by the recurring conflicts despite Government acclaimed response. More so, the persisting conflict has created a complex humanitarian crisis that affects not just the physical security of women but also undermines their access to fundamental socio-economic rights like health and access to education.

Even though scholars like Ahmed and Yusuf (2018), Auta et al (2019), Eze and Agbo (2020), Ajibefun (2021), Cinjel and Kefas (2024) have empirically explored different aspects of the socio-economic impact of farmer-herders' conflict, most of these studies focus on a broader or general geographical context (mostly northern Nigeria or North-Central Nigeria). Or in some cases, the studies were limited in scope (for instance, Mangu Local Government Area in the case of Cinjel and Kefas). With few focusing specifically on how the conflict affects women in Plateau State. More so, even fewer have disaggregated the socio-economic consequences by sector, such as health and education. Therefore, there is a critical knowledge gap in understanding how the ongoing conflicts impact key indicators of well-being, such as health and education, among the most vulnerable demographics (i.e. women) in Plateau State.

It is to this end that this study investigates the impact of farmers-herders' conflict on the health and educational well-being of women in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of farmers-herders' conflict on the health and educational well-being of women in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Specifically, this study is poised to:

1. Determine the extent to which farmers-herders' conflicts affect the health of women in Plateau State.
2. Find out how farmers-herders' conflicts influence women's access to and performance in education in Plateau State.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do farmers-herders' conflicts affect the health of women in Plateau State?
2. How do farmers-herders' conflicts influence women's access to and performance in education in Plateau State?

Research Hypotheses

1. H_0 : Farmers-herders' conflicts do not significantly affect the health of women in Plateau State.
2. H_0 : Farmers-herders' conflicts have no significant influence on women's access to and performance in education in Plateau State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflict is inevitable in human society, arising from incompatible goals and actions with attendant costs and commitments. It is important to state here that the inevitability of conflict stems from the fact that no two human beings are alike. Thus, individual differences which metamorphose into incompatibility brew disagreement that leads to conflict. Jeong (2018) sees conflict as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals. In his submission, Okoro (2018) posits that conflict, characterised by incompatible goals or values, occurs when individuals or groups feel offended or unjustly treated. In the context of social activities, conflict can also mean disagreement between two or more people, which may be destructive or constructive. Thus, from the social point of view, conflict is not necessarily or always negative. Supporting this assertion, Elgoibar et al. (2021) highlight that conflicts, while inherently disruptive, can foster innovation and cooperation when effectively mediated. Thus, how a conflict becomes functional or dysfunctional is dependent on the context of its occurrence and the management and resolution mechanism in place.

Conflict in the context of this study is a situation in which the relationship between and/or among opposing individuals, groups, communities, or states is characterised by a lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontation or war. In Nigeria, farmers and herders are a dichotomy that has been experiencing a lack of cordiality, which has led to

violent conflict, leading to the loss of lives and properties in great proportion. This conflict has remained a major security challenge that confronts Nigeria, and particularly women and children who must bear the brunt.

Historically, Nigerian farmers and Fulani herdsmen coexisted peacefully through mutual respect and cooperation. However, the past one and a half decade has experienced intense crises between farmers and herders, particularly in the North-Central region. Supporting this assertion, Moh'd and Samu (2025) posits that farmers and herders' conflict is common in Nigeria, but the conflict is worst in the North Central region of Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa. According to Okoro (2018), farmers-herders' conflicts are conflicts occurring between peasant farmers or subsistence cultivators and nomadic or transhumant livestock keepers. Farmers and herders' conflicts are primarily disputes over farmlands and grazing lands. Thus, a conflict was necessitated by the competition for land, either for farming or grazing. According to Olanrewaju and Balana (2023), violent conflicts in Nigeria often stem from economic disparities and competition for resources. In the case of farmers-herders' conflict, it has become prevalent due to factors such as land scarcity, population growth, climate change, desertification, etc. Above all, women who are primarily users of land for farming in Plateau State are often displaced from their farmlands or have their crops destroyed. Also, the health centres and schools are sometimes destroyed, or they may not be able to access them due to fear of being attacked.

In general, violent conflicts are considered the basic causes of ill health and an increasing number of deaths among women. This is because of the collapse of health facilities and health centres and the difficulty of delivering services and health care for the population, especially women and children. This usually leads to the aggravation and worsening of the health status of women. Conclusively, violent conflicts affect population health in ways that extend beyond the direct effect of violence through a combination of increased exposure to infectious disease, acute malnutrition, poor sanitation, and lack of health services.

The impact of farmers-herders' conflict on education is numerous and complex, resulting from constraints in the supply of and/or demand for education. They include resource reduction for educational purposes, recruitment or engagement of women into armed groups, safety threats in and on the way to school, and the consequences of poverty and food security (Justino, 2016). For example, conflict can impede educational access and quality through resource reductions caused by the destruction or occupation of schools by internally displaced people, decreased funding for education, or a diminished teaching force as teachers stop attending due to perceived risks. Furthermore, as opined by Kibris (2015), attendance and learning may be indirectly influenced when conflict results

in increased poverty or food insecurity. In these situations, households may struggle with the cost (or opportunity cost) of attending school and equally suffer malnutrition, which limits cognitive abilities in the short-term and long-term, especially when women are traumatized during violent conflicts. Bernado and Baranovich (2014) report that conflict can aggravate gender inequalities. This could occur through reduced educational opportunities for women, who are more likely to be victims of sexual assault.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on Human Capital Theory, propounded by Theodore W. Schultz (1961) and further developed by Gary S. Becker (1964). The theory argues that investments in human beings, particularly through education, health, and skills development enhances individuals' productivity, income, and overall economic growth. The theory views education and healthcare not as consumption but as productive investments, like investments in physical capital, which yield long-term social and economic returns. It assumes that individuals with better education, skills, and health are more productive, earn higher incomes, and contribute more effectively to societal development. Conversely, inadequate investment in human capital leads to low productivity, poverty, and underdevelopment.

This theory is highly relevant to the study of the impact of farmers-herders' conflict on the health and educational well-being of women in Plateau State, Nigeria. The persistent conflict has significantly disrupted key pillars of human capital development, particularly education, health, and livelihoods, with women and children being the most affected. School closures, displacement, insecurity, and destruction of educational infrastructure have reduced access to education, especially for girls, leading to high dropout rates, early marriage, and child labour. According to Human Capital Theory, such educational disruptions diminish future earning potential and perpetuate intergenerational poverty.

In terms of health, the conflict has limited access to healthcare services and increased cases of trauma, malnutrition, maternal health challenges, and gender-based violence. Human Capital Theory posits that poor health reduces individuals' ability to work, learn, and engage in productive economic activities. Women's health deteriorates due to conflict, their productivity declines, weakening household welfare and community economic stability.

Furthermore, the destruction of farmlands, markets, and livelihoods has undermined women's economic capacity. Women's reduced income limits their ability to invest in their own well-being and in their children's education and health, reinforcing a cycle of human capital depletion. The theory, therefore, explains how conflict not only causes

immediate economic hardship but also weakens long-term development by eroding human capital.

Overall, Human Capital Theory provides a strong analytical framework for understanding how farmers-herders conflict in Plateau State negatively affects women's socio-economic wellbeing by disrupting investments in education, health, and productive skills. It underscores the importance of restoring peace and prioritizing human capital investments as essential strategies for improving women's welfare, breaking cycles of poverty, and achieving sustainable development in the State.

Empirical Review

Ahmed and Yusuf (2018), in their study titled *Health Consequences of Farmers-Herders Conflicts on Women in Nigeria*, employed a descriptive survey research design to assess the health impacts of conflict on women in Benue, Kaduna, and Plateau States. The study used simple random sampling to select 300 respondents from conflict-affected areas. Findings indicated a high prevalence of reproductive health issues among women, including miscarriages and complications arising from poor access to medical care during conflicts. Additionally, sexual violence emerged as a significant concern. This study focuses on farmers-herders conflict and women's health outcomes in Plateau State, using a survey design. However, unlike the present study, it did not examine educational well-being and was limited to health impacts. Auta et al. (2019), in their case study titled *The Impact of Armed Conflicts on Maternal and Child Health in North-Central Nigeria*, examined the effects of conflict on maternal and child health in Plateau and Benue States. Using snowball sampling, the study selected 100 women of reproductive age from conflict-affected areas. Findings revealed that conflict led to increased maternal mortality rates due to limited access to prenatal care and skilled birth attendants. Additionally, malnutrition and waterborne diseases were prevalent among displaced women and children. Data were analysed using qualitative thematic analysis, which helped identify common patterns in respondents' experiences but did not quantify the severity of health challenges. The study is similar to the current research in examining conflict-related health challenges among women in Plateau State. It differs from the present study in its exclusive focus on maternal and child health using qualitative methods and snowball sampling, without quantitatively measuring health or educational well-being.

Eze and Agbo (2020), in their qualitative study titled *Gender-Specific Health Outcomes of Communal Conflicts in Nigeria*, explored the mental and physical health impacts of conflict on women in Plateau State. Using purposive sampling, the study selected 50 respondents and collected data through in-depth interviews. Findings revealed widespread mental health challenges, including

anxiety and depression, among women exposed to violence. Many women also lacked access to essential healthcare services due to displacement. The study utilized narrative analysis for data interpretation, which provided rich insights into the lived experiences of affected women but lacked statistical validation. The study also focuses on gender-specific health impacts of conflict among women in Plateau State. However, it differs from the present study by relying solely on qualitative data and excluding educational well-being and statistical analysis of conflict impacts.

Cinjel and Kefas (2024) examined the conflict between the Mwaghavul Arable farmers and the Fulani herdsmen in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State. The study adopted a mixed-methods research design. Data was elicited from documentary facts. Questionnaire, interview, focus group discussion and observations were used as instruments for data collection. These instruments were subjected to face and content validation. The study used Pearson's chi-square and ANOVA to test the hypotheses of the study at a 0.05 level of significance. The study also found that conflict harms socio-economic development, which includes schools, businesses, mutual trust and agricultural production. The study observes that there is a need to modernize the herding system in Nigeria, the need for civic education, and moral probity, among others. This observation is the main purpose of the study, which focuses on the socio-economic effects of farmers-herders' conflicts.

Justino (2020), in her study titled *Education Under Attack: Violent Conflict and Schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa*, investigated the impact of violent conflicts on women's access to education. The study employed stratified random sampling to select 300 female students in conflict-affected areas. Data was collected through surveys and focus group discussions, and regression models were used for analysis. The findings indicated that violent conflicts significantly reduce school attendance and academic performance among female students, primarily due to displacement, insecurity, and economic hardships. Similarly, Ajibefun (2021), in his study titled *Economic Impacts of Violent Conflicts on Women in Rural Nigeria*, examined the broader economic consequences of conflict on women, particularly in relation to education. The study targeted women in conflict-prone areas of northern Nigeria, selecting 200 respondents through random sampling. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and focus group discussions, and analysis using regression techniques. The findings revealed that many women drop out of school during conflicts, either to care for displaced families or to avoid violence, thereby limiting their long-term economic opportunities.

Danjuma and Mohammed (2021) examined *The Gendered Impact of Farmers-Herders Conflicts on Education in Northern Nigeria* using a cross-sectional survey design. The study surveyed 300 women and girls in conflict-affected areas using cluster sampling, with data analysis through statistical regression techniques. The findings indicated that insecurity and economic hardship led to high dropout rates among girls, while women were less likely to enrol in skill-acquisition programs due to financial constraints.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design approach in the collection and analysis of data. The target population comprised women who were directly or indirectly affected by the farmers-herders' conflict in Plateau State. The study focused on six conflict-prone Local Government Areas (LGAs): Barkin Ladi, Bassa, Bokkos, Mangu, Riyom, and Wase, which are distributed across the three senatorial zones of Plateau State. The projected population of women in these LGAs as of December 2024 was 1,166,064. A sample size of 400 women was selected using the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator to ensure representativeness. However, only 384 respondents fully completed and returned their questionnaires. Thus, the analysis was based on the 384 questionnaires. The sample was proportionately distributed across the six LGAs based on their population size. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed, beginning with purposive sampling to select conflict-prone LGAs and identify eligible respondents. This was followed by stratified sampling to ensure proportional representation across LGAs, and finally, simple random sampling within each stratum to minimize selection bias. Primary data were collected for this study using a structured questionnaire that consisted of closed-ended and Likert-scale items, with responses coded as Strongly Disagree (SDA) 1, Disagree (D) 2, Moderately Agree (MA) 3, Agree (A) 4, and Strongly Agree (SA) 5. The research instrument was subjected to content and face validity through expert review, and a pilot study was conducted in a conflict-prone LGA outside the study area to test reliability. Trained research assistants carried out data collection. Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, mean, and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while multiple linear regression analysis was employed to test the study hypotheses. Farmers-herders' conflict (FHC score) was entered as the main predictor, with age, education level, and household size included as control variables. Separate regression models were estimated for women's health well-being and educational well-being outcomes.

The significance and relative contribution of predictors were determined using standardized beta coefficients, t-values, p-values, and 95% confidence intervals. The decision rule for the interpretation of the mean was based

on a criterion mean of 3, whereby any item whose mean score was equal to or above 3 was accepted, and any whose mean score was below 3 was rejected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One: To what extent do farmers-herders’ conflicts affect the health of women in Plateau State?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on the Impact of Farmers-Herders’ Conflict on the Health of Women

Statement	SDA	D	MA	A	SA	Mean	SD
Acute malnutrition among women	20 (5.21%)	32 (8.33%)	78 (20.31%)	142 (36.98%)	112 (29.17%)	3.77	1.116
Less access to healthcare services	21 (5.47%)	36 (9.38%)	82 (21.35%)	140 (36.46%)	105 (27.34%)	3.71	1.128
Exposes women to psychological trauma	28 (7.29%)	45 (11.72%)	95 (24.74%)	135 (35.16%)	81 (21.09%)	3.51	1.167
Exposure to infectious diseases and STDs	29 (7.55%)	46 (11.98%)	94 (24.48%)	135 (35.16%)	80 (20.83%)	3.50	1.161
Exposes women to maternal healthcare risk	30 (7.81%)	48 (12.50%)	96 (25.00%)	132 (34.38%)	78 (20.31%)	3.47	1.174

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics on the impact of farmers-herders’ conflict on women’s health in Plateau State. The item “Acute malnutrition among women” recorded the strongest consensus, with 86.15% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing and a high mean score (M - 3.77, SD - 1.12), indicating that conflict significantly increases women’s vulnerability to malnutrition.

Similarly, reduced access to healthcare services was widely acknowledged, with 85.15% cumulative agreement and a mean score of 3.71 (SD - 1.13). Respondents also strongly agreed that the conflict exposes women to

psychological trauma, as reflected by 80.99% agreement and a mean score of 3.51 (SD - 1.17). High levels of agreement were further recorded for exposure to infectious diseases and sexually transmitted diseases (80.47%; M - 3.50, SD - 1.16) and maternal healthcare risks (79.69%; M - 3.47, SD - 1.17).

Overall, all health indicators recorded mean scores above 3.40, demonstrating a broad consensus that farmers-herders conflict poses serious and multifaceted health risks to women, with malnutrition and limited healthcare access being the most severe impacts.

Research Question Two: How do farmers-herders’ conflicts influence women’s access to and performance in education in Plateau State?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on the Impact of Farmers-Herders’ Conflict on Women’s Access to and Performance in Education

Statement	SDA	D	MA	A	SA	Mean	SD
Diminishes the teaching force	18 (4.69%)	28 (7.29%)	70 (18.23%)	140 (36.46%)	128 (33.33%)	3.86	1.102
Reduces access to education	23 (5.99%)	39 (10.16%)	85 (22.14%)	143 (37.24%)	94 (24.48%)	3.64	1.134
Increase in dropout rate	25 (6.51%)	44 (11.46%)	95 (24.74%)	135 (35.16%)	85 (22.14%)	3.55	1.146
Attendance does not wane	84 (21.88%)	130 (33.85%)	98 (25.52%)	46 (11.98%)	26 (6.77%)	2.48	1.156
Does not limit cognitive abilities	141 (36.72%)	113 (29.43%)	76 (19.79%)	32 (8.33%)	22 (5.73%)	2.17	1.179

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics on the impact of farmers-herders’ conflict on women’s access to and performance in education in Plateau State. The statement “Diminishes teaching force” recorded a strong consensus,

with 88.02% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. The high mean score (M - 3.86, SD - 1.10) indicates a widespread perception that conflict significantly reduces the availability of teachers. Similarly, a large majority of

respondents (83.86%) agreed that the conflict reduces access to education, reflected in a high mean score (M - 3.64, SD - 1.13). Respondents also strongly endorsed the view that conflict increases school dropout rates, with 82.04% agreement and a mean score of 3.55 (SD - 1.15), suggesting that educational discontinuity is a major consequence of violence.

In contrast, respondents largely disagreed with the reverse-coded statement that attendance does not wane, as 55.73% expressed disagreement, yielding a lower mean score (M - 2.48, SD - 1.16). Likewise, 66.15% disagreed that

conflict does not limit cognitive abilities, reflected in the lowest mean score (M - 2.17, SD - 1.18), indicating that respondents believe conflict negatively affects learners' cognitive development.

Overall, the results demonstrate that farmers-herders' conflict poses serious educational challenges by reducing the teaching workforce, limiting access to education, increasing dropout rates, and undermining school attendance and cognitive development.

Hypothesis One: Farmers-herders' conflicts do not significantly affect the health of women in Plateau State.

Table 3: Summary of the Linear Regression Analysis Predicting the Effect of Farmers-Herders' Conflict on the Health of Women in Plateau State

Multiple Regression Predicting Health Well-Being Index

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	95% CI	VIF
Constant	4.12	0.31	—	13.29	0.001	[3.51, 4.73]	—
FHC score	0.58	0.05	0.63	11.60	0.001	[0.48, 0.68]	1.32
Age	-0.01	0.00	-0.10	-2.21	0.028	[-0.02, 0.00]	1.18
Education level	0.08	0.04	0.12	2.00	0.046	[0.00, 0.16]	1.41
Household size	-0.03	0.02	-0.07	-1.50	0.135	[-0.07, 0.01]	1.25

The multiple regression model in Table 3 was statistically significant and explained 47% of the variance in health wellbeing (Adj. $R^2 = .47$). The FHC score was a significant positive predictor ($\beta = 0.63$, $p = 0.001$), indicating that increased conflict exposure is associated with poorer health outcomes. Age was a negative predictor ($\beta = 0.10$, p

$= 0.028$), and education level was a positive predictor ($\beta = 0.12$, $p = 0.046$). Household size was not significant. We therefore reject the null hypothesis and conclude that farmers' and herders' conflicts significantly affect the health of women in Plateau State.

Hypothesis Two: Farmers-herders' conflicts have no significant influence on women's access to and performance in education in Plateau State.

Table 4: Model Summary for the Effect of Farmers-Herders' Conflict on Women's Access to and Performance in Education in Plateau State

Multiple Regression Predicting Educational Well-Being Index

Predictor	B	SE	B	t	p	95% CI	VIF
Constant	3.89	0.28	—	13.89	0.001	[3.34, 4.44]	—
FHC score	0.61	0.04	0.66	15.25	0.001	[0.53, 0.69]	1.29
Age	-0.01	0.00	-0.08	-1.78	0.076	[-0.02, 0.00]	1.18
Education level	0.12	0.03	0.17	4.00	0.001	[0.06, 0.18]	1.38
Household size	-0.02	0.02	-0.05	-1.10	0.272	[-0.06, 0.02]	1.22

The multiple regression model in Table 4 was statistically significant and explained 52% of the variance in educational wellbeing (Adj. $R^2 = 0.52$). The FHC score was a significant positive predictor ($\beta = 0.66$, $p = 0.001$), indicating that increased conflict exposure is associated with worse educational outcomes. Education level was also a positive predictor ($\beta = 0.17$, $p = 0.001$). Age and household size were not significant predictors. We therefore reject the null hypothesis and conclude that farmers' and herders' conflicts significantly affect women's access to and performance in education in Plateau State.

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of research question one was to find out the extent to which farmers-herders' conflict affects the health of women. The findings reveal that the conflict results in acute malnutrition among women, with a cumulative agreement of 86.15% (mean of 3.77), and it results in less access to healthcare services due to the closure or vulnerability of health centres to attacks, having had a cumulative agreement of 85.15% (mean of 3.71). These two were the most significant health-related effects of the conflict. Similarly, psychological and emotional trauma with a cumulative agreement of 80.99% (mean of 3.51), increased exposure to infectious and sexually

transmitted diseases with a cumulative agreement of 80.47% (mean of 3.50), and maternal healthcare risks with cumulative agreement of 79.69% (mean of 3.47) also ranked high, indicating that the conflict has far-reaching physical and mental health consequences for women. This is consistent with the findings from Auta et al (2019), Eze and Agbo (2020), Search for Common Ground (2018) and Ajibo et al (2023) who reported that conflict leads to food shortages and rising malnutrition, lack of access to health care centres, increase exposure to infectious diseases, widespread mental health including anxiety and depression and poor maternal healthcare. This can be predicated on the Human Capital theory, which considers health as a necessity for human capital development. It presupposes that poor health and nutrition undermine productivity, making it harder for women to escape poverty and improve their quality of life.

The study identified the impact of farmers-herders' conflict on education to include primarily diminished teaching force due to transfer of teachers or staff absenteeism from perceived risks with a cumulative agreement of 88.02% (mean of 3.86) which ranked highest, followed by reduced access to education due to destruction or closure of schools with a cumulative agreement of 83.86% (mean of 3.64), increased dropout rates among women with a cumulative agreement of 82.04% (mean of 3.55). However, the findings revealed that the respondents reject the statement that attendance does not wane and farmers-herders' conflict does not limit the cognitive abilities of women, having had cumulative disagreement of 55.73% (mean of 2.48) and 66.15 (mean of 2.17), respectively. These findings agree with Justino (2020) and Ajibefun (2021), who established in their findings that violent conflicts significantly reduce school attendance and academic performance among female students. The finding also agrees with Cinjel and Kefas (2024) and Gema (2023), who found that farmers-herders conflict hurts schools' access to quality education. More so, many women drop out of school during conflicts. Supporting these findings, Danjuma and Mohammed's (2021) findings indicated that insecurity and economic hardship led to high dropout rates among girls, while women were less likely to enrol in skill acquisition programmes due to financial constraints. This finding is particularly situated on the Human Capital theory as the impact of farmers-herders' conflict has severe implications for human capital development, particularly for women and children. Persistent violence disrupts essential services such as education and skill acquisition, which are critical for improving socio-economic wellbeing.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of farmers-herders' conflict on the health and educational well-being of women in Plateau State, Nigeria. The findings of this study

conclude that farmers-herders' conflict has profound and multidimensional consequences for the well-being of women, particularly in the areas of health and education. The findings demonstrate that the conflict significantly contributes to acute malnutrition, restricted access to healthcare services, psychological trauma, heightened exposure to infectious diseases, and increased maternal health risks among women. These outcomes underscore the vulnerability of women in conflict-affected communities and affirm that sustained violence undermines their physical, mental, and reproductive health. From the perspective of Human Capital Theory, such health deprivations weaken women's productivity, limit their economic participation, and entrench cycles of poverty.

Similarly, the study establishes that farmers-herders' conflict severely disrupts women's educational opportunities. The diminished teaching workforce, destruction and closure of schools, and rising dropout rates among women reveal the extent to which insecurity erodes access to quality education. Although respondents rejected claims that attendance and cognitive abilities remain unaffected, the overall findings confirm that conflict negatively influences school participation and learning outcomes. By disrupting education and skill acquisition, the conflict constrains human capital formation and long-term socio-economic development. Overall, the study highlights that resolving farmers-herders' conflict is not only a security imperative but also a critical step toward safeguarding women's health, education, and sustainable development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Government and humanitarian agencies (NGOs) should prioritize the establishment of protected and mobile healthcare services in conflict-prone areas, with a specific focus on women's nutritional support, maternal healthcare, and mental health services.

The Plateau State Government and Local Government areas affected should implement conflict-responsive education policies, including the protection and rehabilitation of schools, incentives to retain teachers in affected areas, and targeted support programmes such as scholarships, safe learning spaces, and vocational training for women and girls.

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