

## The print media and the challenges of stereotyping in reporting conflict issues in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*This paper examines the Print media and the Challenges of Stereotyping in Reporting Conflict Issues in Nigeria. The paper investigates how the print media stereotype Fulani ethnic group in Nigeria. The underpinning theories for the study are social responsibility theory and standpoint theory. It adopts a qualitative desk-based research method to gather and analyze available print and published secondary data to investigate the problem. The findings revealed that the rate at which some of the Nigerian press report Hausa-Fulani herdsmen and farmers' clashes is detrimental to the image of the Fulani tribe and if care is not taken could cause permanent hatred for the Fulani tribe. The study concludes that the press plays an important role in our contemporary society as it shapes ideology and influence people's world views and how we perceive issues. Therefore, the press should be sensitive to stories that could cause hatred for any sect of society. The study, therefore, recommends, among others, that, the press should always dig deep into every story to discover the truth behind the facts instead of having the wrong premonition concerning any socio-political, ethnic, and religious sect.*

**Keywords:** Print media, Journalist, Stereotyping, Conflict Reporting, Herders/Farmers clashes.



## Introduction

Resource use conflicts as a resultant effect of desertification- drought and land degradation- have manifested into economic and social strife over the years. This is evidenced in the war between herders and farmers in Nigeria which started as far back as the 20th century. Among every other sector being threatened by the effect of desertification in Nigeria, farming and grazing suffer the most loss. This is because all farming and animal rearing activities rely solely on the quantity and quality of available land resources which, according to recent researches, are limited.<sup>1</sup> In the struggle to utilize the limited fertile spaces, both farmers and herders strive to protect their interests and achieve their dreams to flourish economically but such struggle more often than not leads to a violent disagreement with death counts<sup>2</sup>.

Several authors have given different perspectives on conflicts based on their social, cultural, and political environment. Gyong defined conflict as the struggle for dominance or control of one person or group by the other in such a way as to subjugate or even eliminate the opponent<sup>3</sup>. Ekong defined conflict as that form of social interaction in which the actors seek to obtain a scarce reward by eliminating or weakening their contenders<sup>4</sup>. Nigeria

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<sup>1</sup> Muhammed-Oyeode, A. (2018). *Memorandum of Understanding by the Nigerian Working Group on Peace building and Governance*. Retrieved from <http://allafrica.com> on 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Olagunju T.E. Drought, desertification and the Nigerian Environment: A review. *Journal of Ecology and the natural environment*. 7,7 (2015): 196-209.

Oli, Nneka, Ibekwe, Christopher, & Nwankwo, Ignatius . Prevalence of Herdsmen and Farmers Conflict in Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovative Studies in Sociology and Humanities*. 3, 1, 2018: 10-39

<sup>3</sup> Gyong, J. The Structure of Communication in Peace and Conflict Resolution, Identity, Crisis and Development in Africa (B. A. Celestine, Ed.) Lagos: Malhouse Press. 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Ekong, E. E. An Introduction to Rural Sociology (2nd ed.). Uyo: Dove Educational Publishers. 2003.

has experienced and is still experiencing conflicts of grave proportions among several ethnic and religious communities across the states<sup>5</sup>. From sociological perspectives, long accumulated and unresolved differences are primarily responsible for the incessant strife between the herders and the farmers<sup>6</sup>. These differences are perceived to be aggravated by the media representation of the two tribes.

Therefore, the manner of coverage of conflict stories by Nigerian press calls for an investigation. It is very uncommon today to see a conflict story that is not sensationalized and sectionalized. Although the press should not throw fairness and objectivity into the dustbin in the discharge of their duty, they should also realize that they can only survive in a peaceful environment. Conflict stories should be written in a way that does not exacerbate the situation.

Adejola and Bello said objectivity is the ultimate and fundamental canon of journalism<sup>7</sup>. The press, as a matter of principle and without prejudice to the concept of objectivity, should play down on news stories relating to a person's ethnic group, religion, sex, or any physical or mental illness or handicap.

Meanwhile, ethical practice is the "key plank" for excellence in the journalism profession and the "alpha and omega of public

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<sup>5</sup>Aliyu, Abdu-Sada. (2015). *Causes and Resolution of Conflict between Cattle herders and Crop farmers in Katsina State*. A Dissertation Submitted To The School of Postgraduate Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, In Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements For The Award Of Master of Science Degree In Agricultural Extension And Rural Sociology.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid 1.

<sup>7</sup>Adejola Aminat, and Bello Semiu, *Media Ownership and Objectivity: Issues involved and the future direction in Journalism and Media in Nigeria. Context, Issues and Practice*. Lai Oso, OlatunjiOlarotimi& Owens-IbieNosa edited. Canada: Canada University Press. 2014.

communication” of which the media are the centerpiece<sup>8</sup>. McQuail said conflict story should be written to suit the sixth model of objectivity which asked journalists while being objective, to avoid slant, rancor, and obvious purpose<sup>9</sup>. Headlines should not be purposively drafted to fuel conflict. The press operating in a tribal cum religious prone environment like Nigeria should not carry out their duty without recourse to whose ox is gored as maintained by some critics of peace journalism.

However, one of the critics of peace journalism, Lyon, argued that the philosophy of peace journalism harms the integrity of the profession<sup>10</sup>. According to him, "Our task is always to seek to find out what is going on, not carrying any other baggage"<sup>11</sup>. If there is conflict resolution we report on it in context: We do not engage in it." This is based on the point of view that journalists should not act as peacekeepers but report events as they unfold, no matter whose ox is gored.

The proponents of peace journalism according to Jimoh, however, describe objectivity as a myth and that journalists through a choice of stories to feature, choice of words and emphasis placed on certain angles of a story are influenced by their personal and institutional biases which, expectedly, should favor the promotion of peace at all time<sup>12</sup>. The inability to respect

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<sup>8</sup>Kayode, Olujimi. Ethical Challenges of Tabloidization and Trivialization in the Nigerian Media space in *Journalism and Media in Nigeria. Context, Issues and Practice*. Oso Lai, OlatunjiOlarotimi& Owens-IbieNosa edited. Canada: Canada University Press. 2014.

<sup>9</sup>McQuail, Dennis. *Media performance: Mass Communication & Public Interest*. London: Sage Publications. 1992.

<sup>10</sup>Lyon, D. (2003). *Witnessing the truth.Open Democracy*, Retrieved August6,2018from<http://www.opendemocracy.net/articlesPDF/993.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid see 9

<sup>12</sup>Jimoh, Jide. *Conflict sensitive journalism in the Nigerian context in Journalism and Media in Nigeria: Context, Issues and Practice*. Oso Lai, OlatunjiOlarotimi& Owens-IbieNosa edited. Canada: Canada University Press. 2014

and play down in reporting ethnic issues will fuel existing conflict with negative consequences on the subject of the news story. The press should report seeking a solution to ethnicity in the country instead of exploiting it.

The manner at which Fulani ethnic related conflict stories were covered seemed to incite. It was, therefore, not clear whether reporters deliberately coined headlines on ethnically related stories to incite “opposing” ethnic groups to react or they do it to uphold the journalism ethics to the latter without considering who will be at the receiving end.

More so, the core tenet of social responsibility theory calls for the press freedom in any society with full consideration for being socially responsible. This study, therefore, seeks to establish if the manners of reporting ethnically related stories are ethical or not in an ethnic prone environment like Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the study**

The following objectives were formulated to guide this study:

1. To examine how the press stereotype Fulani ethnic group in Nigeria.
2. To find out the causes of Conflict between Pastoralists and Farmers in Nigeria.
3. To examine the role of the Nigerian press in reporting ethnic related conflict.

### **Social Responsibility Theory of the Press**

The social responsibility theory of the press serves as a framework for this study. This theory emerged from the strength of the libertarian theory of the press. The major tenet of the theory is that freedom carries concomitant obligations, and the press, which enjoys a privileged position under the government,

is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication<sup>13</sup>.

The theory calls for freedom of the press but balances it with the need for the media to be socially responsible in the course of performing their duty<sup>14</sup>. More so, while quoting McQuail, Anaeto, Onabajo & Osifeso said, the theory is premised on the principle that the media should avoid whatever might lead to crime, violence, civil disorder or gives offense to minority groups<sup>15</sup>. They added that the theory expects freedom to carry concomitant obligations and that the press should be socially responsible to the society in carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication.

Adekoya, however, said that, for this theory to work successfully, it should demand pluralist media in a pluralist society where the media is only responsible through multiple ownership<sup>16</sup>. He added that the media will not play a monopoly because the audience and media scholars will raise questions if media published or broadcast anything wrongly or manipulate any story.

Concerning the present study, an application of this theory by the press implies that the press should maintain neutrality and avoid sensationalism while reporting conflict issues in a conflict-prone society like Nigeria. A responsible mode of reporting should be encouraged. The press should understand that their primary role of watchdog will also be affected if crisis engulfed in society through their reports. The press should not be used to blackmail any ethnic group to score cheap political points. Thorough investigations should be carried out by the press to identify culprits in conflict reporting but if it is centered on ethnicity,

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<sup>13</sup>Anaeto, Solomon, G., Onabajo, Olufemi S, and Osifeso, James .B. *Models and Theories of Communication*. USA: African Renaissance Books Incorporation. 2008

<sup>14</sup>Adekoya, Dunola (20 13). *Normative theories of the press*. - 6 theories retrieved July, 7, 2018 from <http://www.bizzybrain2013.blogspot.com>.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. 12

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 13

gender, and/or religion, the media should play down on it. Religion issue which could engulf crisis like that of the *Punch* and *The Nation* newspapers of Friday, 3rd November 2018 on Governor El-Rufai's Muslim/Muslim ticket should not ordinarily be made a front-page headline. According to *Punch* headline, 2019: El-Rufai picks fellow Muslims, Hadiza Balarabe, as running mate. This kind of headline should be discouraged especially in a conflict-prone society like Nigeria with a special interest in the currently "burning" Kaduna state.

### **The Standpoint Theory**

The standpoint theory is premised on the claim that individuals' standpoint usually affects their worldview<sup>17</sup>. The worldview of an individual is affected by his socio-cultural and political environment. About this, Doghudje and Elegbe say the theory proposes that the social groups within which we are located powerfully shape what we experience and know as well as how we understand and communicate with ourselves, others and the world<sup>18</sup>.

This theory posits that what we know is affected by where we stand when an issue arises (one's subjective position) in society. This is the reason Smith claims that no one can have complete objective knowledge, no two people have the same standpoint; and that we must not take the standpoint from which we speak for granted. Relating this theory to the present study, the press, ethically, is supposed to be objective from the process of preparing interview questions for their subject of the interview up to the process of reporting, editing, and disseminating news stories to the public. Strict adherence to this principle will not only earn the press a high level of respect but will also prevent it from fueling the crisis in society. Reporters are, therefore,

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 12

<sup>18</sup> Doghudje, V.R and Elegbe, O. Gender stereotypes in Nigerian Film: A discursive analysis in *Journal of Communication and Media Research*. Delta: Delta State University. 6 (2)2014.

advised to be balanced in their report writing, put off rumor, and unverified stories to avoid story that could lead to crisis.

### **Conceptual Clarifications Ethics of Journalism**

The term ethics according to Daramola is from the Greek word *ethikos* (moral) and *ethos* <sup>19</sup>(character) which refer to the various rules of conduct held by a group or individuals. He added that ethics, in philosophy, is the study of human actions in respect to being right or wrong or the study of human conduct in the light of moral principle<sup>20</sup>. Ethics or moral philosophy is an acquired habit of the human intellect which enables its procession to reason to true conclusions about the rightness or wrongness of human actions as a means for attaining true happiness. Daramola added that Pratt and other philosophers agree that ethics and morals are synonymous and that both involve human action or praxis.'

While looking at the issues in journalism ethics, Arora said that "Every news organization has only its credibility and reputation to rely on."<sup>21</sup> Ethics according to him includes truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness, and public accountability. He said like many broader ethical systems, journalism ethics include the principle of "limitation of harm". This often involves the withholding of certain details from reports such as the names of minor children, crime victims' names or information not materially related to a particular news report of which might, for example, harm someone's reputation

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<sup>19</sup>Daramola, Ifedayo. *Law and Ethics of Media Practice*. Lagos: Owonike Rainbow Press Ltd. 1999.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 18

<sup>21</sup>Arora, N. *Journalism Ethics and Mass Management*. India: Random Publications 2014.



## Ethnic stereotypes in the Media

Media holds significant influence in our daily lives and it infiltrates our perceptions and understanding with continuous messages that impact our belief and value systems. Bias, disempowerment, and discrimination in regards to race have been long-standing issues within several aspects of mainstream media, including television news, entertainment, and advertising<sup>22</sup>. During the early years of broadcast media, which date back to the debut of television in 1939, racial segregation was becoming a heated topic in the United States, shortly followed by a very robust civil rights movement for racial equality.

To this end, Kulaszewicz, said that how media content was formed, selected, and presented was heavily subjected to the opinions of those involved in the industry<sup>23</sup>. Throughout history, the mass media, in various forms, have tended to support the power of the dominant group by presenting to the general public highly negative, emotion-evoking images of minority groups<sup>24</sup>. They added that, in very early films, such as *Birth of a Nation* from 1915 (which was originally called "The Clansman" and "The Tarzan" series from 1932), African Americans were represented in the films as savage, ignorant, thieves, interlopers and potential rapists". Even early film distortions, such as African Americans being played by White people who painted themselves to look, Black, sent strong symbolic messages. These symbolic messages conveyed that Black people were not "good enough" to represent themselves, and were seen as lacking the talent to fill a character role that only Whites could make up for. White people taking

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<sup>22</sup>Gay, V. (2014). *TV was born 75 years ago at World's Fair*. Newsday, (Melville, NY).

<sup>23</sup>Kulaszewicz, K.E.. *Racism and the Media: A Textual Analysis*. MSW Clinical Research Paper Presented to the Faculty of the School of Social Work St. Catherine University and the University of St. Thomas St. Paul, Minnesota in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Work. (2015)

<sup>24</sup>Luther, Catherine., Ringer Carolyn, & Clark, Neemah. *Diversity in U.S. Mass Media*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell. 2012.

over these roles sent a subconscious message to public viewers that the White race was the “preferred,” and the only “capable” group to participate in mainstream media<sup>25</sup>.

Ethnicity and religious differences constitute the major factors that generate conflicts in Nigeria since independence. Rasaq opines that the role that ethnicity plays in stirring and influencing conflicts and civil wars remains an unsettled question, mainly due to the imaginary nature of ethnic groups and their endogenous development during the conflict<sup>26</sup>. There used to be fair play in reporting Fulani ethnic group by the media. In the last three years, news stories concerning Fulani ethnic group do not seem to be positive especially to herders and farmers.

Typical stereotypes and prejudices of Fulani by Nigerian press include Fulani as armed robbers, rapists, violent and uncivilized. Commenting on the Fulani herders’ lapses, Olalye, Odutola & Ojo said the overall media coverage of the conflict was fair and there were expected differences of opinion. He, however, said the most disturbing aspect of the media coverage is the ethnic profiling of the conflict<sup>27</sup>. They said the rate at which the press portrays Fulani Muslim is dangerous and can jeopardize the peace and unity of Nigeria. They, therefore, warns the media “not to heat the polity by playing up the nation’s fault lines”... Between 2010 and 2013 alone, Fulani herdsmen, farmers, and local communities had killed 3,000 people. The clash is mostly located in Nigeria’s middle belt regions.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid. 23

<sup>26</sup>Rasaq, Adisa. Newspaper Framing of Ethnic Issues and Conflict Behaviour in Nigeria in *Journal of Communication and Media Research*. 8, 1 (2016):67-85

<sup>27</sup>Olaleye, R.S., Odutola, J.O., Ojo, M.A., Umar, I.S. and Ndanitsa, M.A. Perceived effectiveness of conflict resolution methods for improved Farmer Pastoralist relationship in Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria. *The Nigerian Journal of Rural Extension and Development*, 3, 2010: 54-58.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid. 26

Farmers accuse the Fulani herders of allowing their animals to feed on still-growing crops and contamination of community watering-places. The Fulani herders, in turn, accuse the farmers of denying them access to grazing areas when alternatives cannot be found. Besides, the rape of non-Fulani women by herders, ethnic tensions between the Hausa and Kanuri as well as latent.

### **Causes of Conflict between Pastoralists and Farmers in Nigeria**

Conflict between pastoralists and farmers has existed since the beginnings of agriculture, but the prevalence of tsetse and low settlement densities kept the incidence of clashes at a low frequency until the twentieth century. In West Africa, the introduction of cheap trypanocides and other veterinary drugs increased herd sizes to levels that compelled herders to seek pastures outside their traditional ecological range<sup>29</sup>.

Intensification of production activities necessitated by increasing the human population is a demand for a large fertile land and more than enough resources that could, to a large extent, satisfy the needs of farmers, herders, and other actors<sup>30</sup>. Holistically, the causes of desertification are often grouped into two broad classes, namely: Natural Causes and Human Activities. However, these two classes only encompass the cause to a large extent but not exhaustively; therefore other causes shall be examined independently outside the two classes.

1. **Natural Causes:** The natural cause of desertification include the poor physical conditions of soils, vegetation, topography as well as inherent extreme climatic variability as evidenced in periodic droughts.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Blench, Roger, and Dendo, Mallam. *The Transformation of Conflict between Pastoralists and Cultivators in Nigeria in Africa*. Moritz, M. edited. United Kingdom: Cambridge. 2003.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 1

<sup>31</sup>FAO (2010). Global forest resources assessment - key findings. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome

- i) **Climate Variation:** Climate variation is often regarded as the most contributing factor to desertification and drought in the dry land of Nigeria<sup>32</sup>. Climate variation is defined as long-term weather patterns that describe a region. It indicates the variability in the state of the climate, persisting for several decades or longer. Changes in individual weather events potentially contribute substantially to changes in climate viability. Greenhouse gases are one of the highest contributors to climate change. Therefore, to solve the problem of climate variation as an aiding element of desertification, wind power, a renewable source of energy can be explored to generate electricity as it has little or no impact on the environment.
- ii) **Drought:** This is a situation whereby an area or region experiences abnormally low rainfall below-standard precipitation which can cause reduced soil moisture; groundwater; diminished streamflow; crop damage and a general dwindle water supply<sup>33</sup>. Drought is the next costly weather event after hurricanes.
- iii) **Erosion:** This means the gradual destruction of crops by wind, water, or other natural factors. Erosion is often caused by over flood aided by lack or blockage of drainages.

The above natural causes of desertification are costly economically, psychologically, and emotionally. Crops worth thousands or even millions of naira could be washed off within

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid. 30

<sup>33</sup>Aliyu, Abdu-Sada. (2015). *Causes and Resolution of Conflict between Cattle herders and Crop farmers in Katsina State*. A Dissertation Submitted To The School of Postgraduate Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, In Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements For The Award Of Master of Science Degree In Agricultural Extension And Rural Sociology.

minutes and demoralizes the cultivators. This is part of the things that can build up frustrations and aggression among farmers. However, despite being natural causes, there are some measures and techniques that can be employed to contain these disasters.

2) **Human Activities:** The anthropogenic action is a major factor identified in the disruption of the ecosystem, exacerbated by natural climate events. It is mostly caused by inappropriate land usage and the continuous rising pressure put upon the accessible resources by the growing population. More particularly, there are four primary causes, notably defective irrigation system, deforestation; over-exploitation, and over-grazing and these are influenced by factors such as changes in population, climate, and socio-economic conditions. Other human factors as contributors to desertification are discussed below:

- i) **Rural-Urban Migration:** Farmers and herders are frustrated and this led to the abandonment of farming for non-farm activities, and sometimes, total drift to urban centers<sup>34</sup>.
- ii) **Overgrazing:** Unsustainable grazing is a major factor in the degradation of agro-forest Nigerian landscapes. Grazing intensification induces serious problems in the ecological functioning of Nigerian grasslands<sup>35</sup>. If moderate grazing could be encouraged, it will contribute to soil preservation from water and wind erosion, creating favorable conditions for vegetation and thus, improving soil fertility<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid. 1

<sup>35</sup>Carmona, C. P., Azca'rate F. M., De Bello F., Ollero H. S, Lep J., &Peco B. 2012. Taxonomical and functional diversity turnover in Mediterranean grasslands: interactions between grazing, habitat type and rainfall. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 49: 1084–1093

<sup>36</sup>Orestis Kairisa., Christos Karavitisa., Luca Salvatib., Aikaterini Kounalakia. & Kostas Kosmasa. Exploring the impact of overgrazing on soil erosion and land degradation in a dry Mediterranean agro-forest

- iii) **Poverty:** This is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that transcends lack of financial means but includes various kinds of non-monetary deprivation including lack of ability to participate in political, social, and cultural institutions and decision-making. Lack of education, unemployment, and social exclusion are things that have been neglected by the government in her strive to curb desertification and insecurity in Nigeria<sup>37</sup>. Taking these three factors into consideration will automatically reduce desertification and insecurity in Nigeria.
- iv) **Deforestation:** It is the conversion of forested areas to non-forested lands. As noted by Olagunju, the large removal of forests is usually practiced to meet various human needs<sup>38</sup>. Nigerian is considered the highest deforested country losing about 55.7% of its primary forest resulting in an annual deforestation rate of 3.6% between 2000-2010<sup>39</sup>.
- v) **Faulty Irrigation Practice:** Irrigation approach is a popular culture in the north. However, many farmers are not familiar with the adequate techniques in proper designing and management of irrigation which has resulted in desertification because of water-logging and salinization. To prevent this, sustainable irrigation projects must be established in Nigeria.
- vi) **Extensive Cultivation/ cultivation of marginal lands:** This is one of the causes of desertification. Marginal lands that areas that disallowed persistent and intensive agriculture are being cultivated for farming and this often leads to degradation. Except

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landscape in Crete, Greece. *Arid Land Research and Management*, 29, 3: 2015: 360-374, DOI: 10.1080/15324982.2014.96869

<sup>37</sup>Ibid. 1

<sup>38</sup>Ibid. 1

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 30

for carefully planned rehabilitation programs, marginal lands exposed to cultivation during the rainy season will be prone to desertification during the season.

- vii) **Bush Burning:** This is a common practice in Nigeria with the highest disruptive effect in the northern region. Because of the low relative humidity and dry Harmattan wind in the north, there is always a high incidence of bush fires making vegetation regeneration difficult; exposing soils to erosion and becoming degraded. Crop damage and indiscriminate bush burning were considered the most common causes of conflict between farmers and pastoralists<sup>40</sup>. These conflicts always have detrimental resultant effects on both parties and the host community.
- viii) **Fuel Wood Extraction:** Removal of trees, shrubs, herbaceous, and grass cover from the weak land, stimulates degradation. Over-reliance on fuel wood is a growing element of desertification in Nigeria. Therefore, there is a need for alternative energy generating means.
- ix) **Unethical Waste disposal:** This is a stinging and widespread problem in both rural and urban areas in Nigeria. To contain desertification, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) collection and disposal is the major waste management problem that must be solved. To prevent desertification, Limited or unavailability of sufficient resources for grazing fields which more often than not leads to destruction or grazing on crops.

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<sup>40</sup>Adelakun, Olufolake, Adurogbangba, B. and Akinbile, L.A..  
Socioeconomic Effects of Farmer Pastoralist Conflict on Agricultural  
Extension Service Delivery in Oyo State, Nigeria in *Journal of  
Agricultural Extension*. Ibadan: Scientific Commons, and Food and  
Agricultural Organization (FAO). (2015)

- x) **Lack of political will to tackle the challenges:**  
There exists a wide gap between policy formulations and implementations.

Consequently, these conflicts has resulted into loss of lives and crops, destruction of properties; displacement of persons, the decline in income and savings, and a threat to food and national security are the consequences of the herders- farmers' conflicts triggered by the effect of desertification<sup>41</sup>. The unresolved problem of desertification and the ceaselessness of the vying for the limited available resources makes the herders-farmers' conflicts to constitute one of the major threats to Nigeria's national security which should not be fueled by media style of reportage rather, the media should serve as a vehicle of peace and use their reports to maintain harmony.

### **Recommendations and Solutions to Farmers-Herders Conflict**

**1. Feasible and Livable National Agricultural Practices:** Agro forestry, a combined agricultural and forestry techniques for a more diverse, healthy, productive, profitable, and durable land-use system, must be adopted. It is a land-use management system that can holistically prevent climate change effects.

**2. Establishment of Cattle-Grazing Field:** The government should establish cattle grazing fields across all regions of the country and ban the open grazing of cattle. However, there must be a diplomatic consultation, dialogue, or appeal to some resentful regions and leaders who may want to stand against the policy.

**3. Awareness, Sensitization, and Education:** Creation of awareness about climate change, desertification, and drought among the general public at all levels is an inexpensive

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<sup>41</sup>Gambari, I., Agwai, M.L., Jega, A., Kwaja,C., Balla, F., Fesse, N ., Muhammed-Oyeode, A. (2018). *Memorandum of Understanding by the Nigerian Working Group on Peace building and Governance*. Retrieved from <http://allafrica.com> on 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2018.



preventive measure to this phenomenon. It will provide an understanding of the cause and consequences of desertification and facilitate possible actions that can remedy and prevent further degradation of soil and lands. Similarly, herders and farmers must be sensitized on when, where, and how to graze and cultivate without causing any damages.

There should be a re-orientation of the general public on the sanctity of human lives and must be educated on how to convey their grievances peacefully and diplomatically.

**4. Exploration of Alternative Source of Energy:** Falling of the few trees and shrubs in desert-prone regions for fuel wood must be reduced by exploring viable alternative energy sources such as biofuel and wind power- the fastest-growing energy resources in the world since 1990. This will conserve forest resources and limit environmental pollution.

**5. Planting and Protection of Trees and Shrub Species:** With intensive and technologically supportive reclamation, trees and vegetation friendly to the area should be planted and established in arid and semi-arid zones until forest zone is achieved. This will help in soil stability, carbon sequestration, and protection of soil from erosion, unhealthiness, and dryness.

**6. Adequate Municipal-Waste-Management Strategy:** Recycling methods must be encouraged among manufacturers to reduce pollution. Therefore, MSW management solution that is financially sustainable, technically feasible, socially, and legally acceptable; and environmentally compliance must be ensured<sup>42</sup>.

**7. Social Inclusion and Rural Development:** There should be rural infrastructural development (such as schools, health centers, and basic social amenities) to address the aggression and frustration built up among the dwellers.

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<sup>42</sup>Abdul-Shafy, H.I. & Mansour S.M. Solid Waste Issue: Sources, Composition, Disposal Recycling and Valorization. *Egyptian Journal of Petroleum*. 27, 2015: 1257-1290.

Also, farmers, herders, and community leaders must be carried along in the formulation, execution, and implementations of policies that directly or indirectly affect them.

**8. Improved Water Management:** Water management practice must be improved by the Federal Ministry of Water Resources to contain climate change cum water shortage and desertification.

**9. Security:** Engagement of Joint Task Force involving military, police, paramilitary, vigilante, and other civil institutions to help restore and enforce law and order in the country, particularly the conflict zones for safe and secure environments peaceful enough to implement the long-term agricultural strategies.

**10. Strict Compliance with Implementation Strategies:** Federal, State, and Local Governments; private agencies, and other stakeholders should help bridge the gap between policy formulations and implementation strategies. All the governments' actions towards climate change, desertification, and insecurity are ineffective because of implementation fault.

### Methodology

The study adopted qualitative desk based research method. This is because desk based research method provides gathering and analysis of information already available in print or published on the internet. The method affords the researchers the opportunity to base their investigation on secondary data. Desk research method involves the collection and analysis of secondary data available in a paper and electronic form together with the use of database, research results, annual reports, professional journals and other sources<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup>Wonuola, Monsura. and Suleman, Sidiq. Revitalization of Indigenous Languages through Mass Media: A tool for cultural re-awakening in *Federal University, Gusau, Journal of Humanities and Education* 1, 1. 2016: 363-374

## **Findings**

The study finds that the rate at which some of the Nigeria press report Hausa Fulani herdsmen and farmers clashes is detrimental to the image of the Fulani tribe and if care is not taken could cause permanent hatred towards the Fulani tribe. The study also found that conflict stories are reported with sensational and sectional tone by the Nigeria press without recourse to whose ox is gauged. It is also noted that reportage of the conflicts stories is one of the factors that contributes to the ever-growing grudges between the Hausas/Yorubas and the Fulanis which, if proper caution is taken while referring to the tribes in the media might soften the hearts of the three tribes towards each other and change their perceptions of rival tribes. It is also revealed that desertification constitute the major source of aggression between the farmers and the herders as they have to strive and compete for the available resources needed for their business activities. If the government should attend to the climatic issue, it might reduce the conflicts whereby the media would not have much to write about and avoid reports that could fuel the aggression.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The press plays an important role in our contemporary society as it shapes ideology and influences people's world views and how they perceive issues. It is quite unfortunate to read on the pages of newspaper stories that reflect reporter's viewpoints. One would expect reporters to disassociate themselves from a particular viewpoint even if it negates their beliefs. Therefore, reporters are to carry out their duty objectively. The reporters need to provide adequate information through in-depth reporting in order to feed the readers with full information.

This study therefore, expects the press to be conflict-sensitive in the discharge of their duty. In an ethnic and religion prone environment like Nigeria, it is outright bias and stereotypes for the press to favour a particular tribe or religion or gender at the expense of peaceful co-existence in the society.

To prevent crisis from escalating, the press should always avoid a negative mindset of any socio-political, ethnic and religious group. The press should not allow itself to be used as tool for promoting ethnic stereotypes by politicians. The press should be sensitive to stories that could aggravate crisis and therefore, avoid it.

The federal, state, local government and traditional leaders should work together to fish out those fueling issues that generate conflict between herders and farmers in Nigeria. The press should always dig deep in to every story in order to discover the truth behind the facts instead of having wrong premonition concerning any sect.