

## **PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE HERDER-FARMER CONFLICTS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON NATIONAL SECURITY: A STUDY OF PUNCH NEWSPAPER**

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### **Abstract**

*This study, “Public Perception of Newspaper Coverage of the Herder-Farmer Conflicts and its Influence on National Security: A Study of Punch Newspaper” evaluates the media as a major player during periods of conflict and its influence on the public understanding and perception of conflict situations. The agenda the media sets and how they are reported can also impact on the direction or outcome of such issues. The aim of this study was to examine the extent and patterns of coverage of the herder-farmer conflicts by Punch Newspaper in Nigeria. The agenda setting theory and individual difference theory formed the theoretical foundation to the study. Findings revealed that Punch Newspaper accords much importance to issues on farmers-herders conflict. The research method adopted for this study was survey method using simple random technique. The study was concluded that, Punch Newspaper played some part in the mitigation of the herders-farmers conflict and performing their watchdog role in the society. The study recommended among other things the urgent intervention by the government so as to address the root and situational causes of the conflict.*

**Keywords: Farmers, Herders, National Security, Newspaper, Media Coverage.**

### **Introduction**

Insecurity is defined as the feeling and state of uncertainty or anxiety about oneself because of lack of confidence, being open to danger or a threat and there is lack of protection. However, no continent is spared of violence as both developed and developing countries around the world is struggling with one form of internal conflict or the other. The upsurge of conflicts in African continent has been internal in nature since the end of cold war between the Soviet Union (USSR) and the United States of America (USA) (Cilliers and Schunemann 2013).

Since Nigeria gained her independence in 1960, there has been a recurrent narrative of internal conflict and these conflicts are often incited under religious and ethnic pretexts which sometimes results to killings and destructions of lives and property.

Scholars and Observers have identified a number of factors responsible for the outburst of internal conflicts in developing countries like Nigeria and these factors are but not limited to the following: poor governance, small arms proliferation, ethnic and religious rivalry, poverty etc.

Laws and policies on religious practices also contribute to the conflicts. For instance, in the year 2000, there was a violent clash between Christians and Muslims in some Northern states of Nigeria due to the introduction of Sharia law in those States. Homer-Dixon (1998) also attributed environmental scarcities to such conflict in developing countries.

Research shows that the conflict between nomadic herders and sedentary farmers in Nigeria is mainly a resource-based conflict. The cause borders mainly on the competition to have access to land and free water for grazing and farming.

Mass desertification of vegetative land and drought in Northern Nigeria makes herders to migrate to other parts of the country so as to provide green pasture and water for their livestock. In the course of their movement to other regions, the nomadic herdsmen settled in some farming communities where green vegetation and water are readily available.

Furthermore, the dispute arises between herders and farmers over an allegation from both parties (farmers and herders). On one hand, farmers accused herders of destroying their crops by encroachment of herded livestock on their farmlands and contaminates their source of water in that community. On the other hand, herders accused farmers of poisoning, killing and stealing their cattle and also denied them access to grazing routes.

Pastoralism is a conventional occupation among 14 groups in Nigeria and they are Kanembu, Kwoya, Fulani, Manga, etc. (Blench 2010, Muhammed, Ismaila and Bibi 2015).

Abbas (2012) further stressed that the Fulanis are the most prominent herding group for they own up to 90 percent of the livestock. The conflict between herders and farmers has turned to be more fatal and bloodier due to the proliferation of firearms among herders. Although the argument here is that they carry guns and other sophisticated weapons so as to protect themselves and their livestock from bandits who steal their cattle but whenever there is controversy between them and farmers, the herders make violence an instructive reaction because of the possession of arms among them.

To the Fulanis, lives can be sacrificed if their cattle can be in jeopardy, in the same way, farmers cannot fold their hands and allow their produce to be eaten up by herder's cattle. This has been supported by scholarly argument that a typical Fulani-pastoralist would care less to live if the survival and sustenance of his herd come under serious threats. This explains the magnitude of aggression and vindictive violence that the Fulani herders show in their disputes with settled farming communities (young and Sing'oei, 2011).

The major player during the period of conflicts is the mass media because of the surveillance function they perform. The media surveys the society, gathers and disseminate information that is of great important to the public. The public are concerned/interested about the safety and security of their environment and as such when conflict arises, their attention is turned to the media so as to keep them abreast of unfolding events.

Tumbler (2009) argues that journalists place emphasis on violence and conflict so as to produce and increase the value of commodity that is supposed to generate profit.

Nevertheless, it is expected that the media's social responsibility to the public should compel a foremost commitment so as to minimize confusion and contribute to social order during conflict situation. Agenda set through media reporting, can directly or indirectly determine the course a conflict situation will follow.

Gilboa (2009) also added that investigating the function and dysfunctions of the local media should be a research priority because the local media's coverage of conflicts affects the people engaged in the conflict. The Nigeria press is a veritable Instrument to what the perception and understanding of the public would be of such conflict.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The level of violence and economic cost from clashes between herders and farmers tend to pose a major national security concern for Nigerians which require adequate measures to be put in place to address this.

The six geo-political zones in the country have suffered the loss of lives and properties as well as displacements due to the herders-farmers' conflict. The violent also have direct impact on food security. According to Mercy Crop (2015) the estimated 13.7 billion dollars is lost annually as a result of the conflicts which is potential revenue that should help to boost the economy.

Furthermore, these attacks by herders according to 2015 Global Terrorism index have now assumed the ill-fame of terrorism (Institute of Economics and peace, 2015). There is, however, the paucity of empirical literate on the role of the mass media in this conflict. Non-reporting or under-reporting of certain conflict by the media could be influenced by lessening and resolution of such conflicts.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To determine the level of prominence given to the conflict between herders and farmers in the selected newspaper.
2. To identify the major sources of news reports on herders and farmers conflict.
3. To know if there is any importance punch newspaper attaches to the herders-farmers conflict.
4. To determine whether punch newspaper coverage of the herders- farmers glorify or support act of terrorism.
5. To know if the crisis between herders and farmers is actually a conflict or acts of aggression by one party.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the level of prominence Punch newspaper gives to the conflicts between herders-farmers conflicts?
2. Who are the major sources of news reports to Punch newspaper on herders-farmers' newspaper in reporting/ publishing herders-farmer conflicts?
3. Does Punch newspaper coverage of the conflict between farmers and herders supports the act of terrorism?
4. Is the crisis between herders-farmers a conflict or acts of aggression by one party?

### **Hypothesis**

**H1:** To know if the public perception or opinion could add any significant value in curtailing the conflict between farmers and herders.

**Ho:** To know if the public perception or opinion will not add any value to curtail the conflict between farmers and herders

### **Significance of the study**

The present state of the insecurity in Nigeria makes this study a timely one. The findings of this study can be useful in further understanding the difficulties associated with insecurity in the country. The Nigerian government and security agencies may come to appreciate the urgency required to tackle the herders-farmers conflict through the analysis of this study.

This study would help establish the influence of the Nigerian press in conflict situation. The press will be appraised of its shortcomings if any and proffer solutions on how to promote conflict resolution. It will also build a case for journalist to undergo training in aspect of reporting conflict.

This study will also contribute to giving out knowledge to the society and help to get more information about the coverage of the farmers and herders crisis by punch newspaper. For researchers in the field of mass communication this would serve as a reference material in conducting similar research.

### **Scope of the study**

This study will investigate the punch newspaper coverage of the farmers-herders crisis in Nigeria and its influence on national security. The punch has national circulation and is on newsstand daily and easily accessible to readers. The restriction of the study to punch newspaper only is because this is an academic research within a short duration and limited financial resources.

### **Area of the study**

Abuja metropolis is the chosen area for this study because of the availability of competent respondents on the subject matter by virtue of high rate of education in the capital city and closeness of Abuja to the researcher. Abuja is one of the six (6) area councils that makeup the federal capital territory including Abaji, Kwali, Kuje, Gwagwalada and Bwari. On its own, Abuja metropolis has six (6) districts, that is Central Business, Maitama, Asokoro, Garki,

Wuse, and Jabi and a number of associated satellite towns such as Kubwa, Karshi, Gwagwalada etc.

### **Limitation of the study**

This study is designed to get the public opinion or perception about the herders and the farmers conflict in Nigeria and its influence on national security, using punch newspaper as a case study.

The first limitation of the study will be, not being able to cover other newspapers for a better understanding of the study because of duration of time. Another limitation will be using Federal Capital Territory (FCT) as the only area of study because of duration of time.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Public perception**

The thinking and belief of people goes a long way to determine their attitudes, behaviors about issues, events which is sometimes seen or regarded as communication. Perception as defined by Feldman means to sort out, interpret and analysis of stimuli which involves our sense organs or our brain. This is because oftentimes people make important judgments in the community where they live which is sometimes regarded as good or bad and it is based on what they see, read, feel, hear, experience or what they talk about.

However, research shows that when people read stories, news and articles in a newspaper they do so because they depend heavily on them to know the latest happenings in the society and what the public opinion is, as regard to an issue of public importance. It is also observed that the newspaper can help to examine the extent and ways in which their messages confirm or disagree with a conflict situation. To support the above assertion, Hession and Richard while examining the perception of the governed (citizens) with the policies and actions of the government found out that the newspaper has a great influence on the people and determine what people perceive as issue and they are but not limited to the following: moods, needs, past experience etc. what this means is that in human being there are some variations that exist and determine how people perceive and react to stimuli.

In this study, it is expected that Nigerians who read newspapers will express different views in how they see the farmers- herders' conflict.

#### **Conflict**

In our everyday lives as an individual or a group, conflict is inevitable and always a part of our society. The basis of conflict may be personal, racial, class, political etc. but in a layman's understanding, conflict is nothing but a fight between two individuals or among group members. There are no two individuals that can think alike, for there is always a difference in the way they think and understand things. Disagreements between two individuals or groups often leads to conflicts and fights and these conflicts arises when individuals or a group have different values, opinions, needs, interests and are unable to find way to resolve their differences because every individual has a different way to look at things and react to various situations.

However, conflict when mentioned anywhere is associated with negativity but scholars have pointed out that conflict can have positive consequences.

From the perspective of social change, Coser (1975) sees conflict in a positive sense by stating that the generations of new institutions, new norms, economic and technological innovations were brought about as a result of conflict. Corroboratively, Gopin (2009) posits that a conflict is said to be constructive or positive when it leads people towards shared goals, greater justice, greater trust etc. but in the contrast, conflict become negative or destructive if the marked difference among people stops commonality in pursuing a goal or interest and worst results in barbarism and violence.

### **National Security**

National security originally is seen as protection from internal attacks (i.e., within a state or a nation) but it is widely understood to include external attacks (i.e., attacks from other nations). National security according to Arnold Wolfer (1960) is targeted at the absence of threats to acquire values and the absence of fear that such values will be attacked.

According to research, for a nation to possess national security it needs to possess some measures for its survival and some of these measures include diplomacy, economic security, environmental security etc. National security as stressed further, means the duty of a nation to cater for the protection and defense of its citizens from any attack.

### **Farmers and Herders**

Nigeria which depends heavily in oil and gas production also produce some agricultural products like vegetable crops and yam tubers in the Southern part of the country while in the north the pastoralists produce most of the grains and livestock used in the country.

Research revealed that 90 per cent of the pastoralists are mostly Fulanis. There has been a good and peaceful relationship between the herders and the sedentary farming communities before now because herder's cattle help to fertilize the farmers land which are used in exchange for grazing. But the past decade has witnessed a grown and disturbing tension between the two parties (herders and farmers) because of the increased violence between them which has also posed a threat to the stability and survival of the country. It is observed that the violent clashes between the two parties (herders and farmers) is always high during planting and harvesting periods which is characterized by high casualty and massive displacement of the affected communities. This has also led many to create defense forces and ethnic militia which further escalates the violence.

### **Background of the Herdsmen-Farmers Conflicts in Nigeria**

In the recent times, herdsmen have been in conflict with the local farmers especially in the Middle Belt, the cause being who will have control of land both for farming and grazing. Tensions between the two parties have also resulted in armed conflicts that have been labeled as religious and tribal sentiments.

A report by Global Terrorism Index in 2015 showed that more than 1000 people were killed in Benue and Kaduna and tens of thousands displaced. Most of the affected rural communities

are driven out of their homes and they automatically become refugees in a neighboring state and for those who stayed back in the villages they are afraid to travel to their farmlands in remote locations due to fear of being killed by the herdsmen.

The legislation of anti-open grazing law in Benue state seems to have contributed to a sudden increase of the violent. It is also on record that the majority of the herders-farmer's clashes have been between Muslim Fulani herdsmen and Christian farming communities which have worsen ethno religious hostilities in the country.

According to a report by Premium Times in 2016, one of the leaders of Fulani Association rose to defend his kinsmen in one of the bloody attacks in Benue state which he said is a reprisal attack by his people against that community for killing a prominent Fulani man.

In a similar scenario, in August that same year another attack by the Fulani herdsmen in that same state claimed the lives of at least 1,269 persons and out of the 23 local government areas in that state, 14 have been occupied by this group. This requires an urgent measure so as to curb the menace.

Almost all part of the country has experienced this bloody clash between herders and farmers and these clashes are always new in their patterns and its implication.

### **The Herders-Farmers conflict in Nigeria: Nature, Causes and Complexity**

Travelling in search of a better place for survival and how to sustain one's occupation or for greener pasture is not new to Nigerians and to Fulani herdsmen to be precise. Fulani as a tribe lived mostly in northern part of Nigeria. Majority of these group are Muslims who lives in rural and some in urban places, usually they share a lot of things in common with the Hausa people that is why they are been called Hausa-Fulani.

However, due to an increased attack by these herdsmen and the experience of the affected communities who are victims, the entire tribe of Fulani has been condemned at the expense of the innocent ones. The interaction between these two parties is inevitable as the nomadic herders may depend on the farmers (host communities) for grains while on the other hand the farmers may also depend on the cattle dung which may serve as manure. So, forming a good relationship with farmers is very important for the nomadic herders so that they can be tolerated and welcomed by their host communities. It is when there is no mutual relationship between the two parties (herders and farmers) that the herders will either be relocating to different communities every year or may depend on intimidating the farmers (Blench 2003). The above assertion tends to explain why the violence always breakout between herders and farmers.

A lot of factors have been attributed to the root causes of the bloody conflict between herdsmen and farmers and some of the factors are traced to the following: livestock theft, crop damage by the cattle, obstruction of traditional migration routes, illicit firearms both locally made, and the ones smuggled in from outside, land and water etc. The direct effect of climate change which has resulted to an increase in the scarcity of resources is also a contributory factor. The desertification and increased drought in northern part of the country also affected

about 45 per cent of the land mass in Africa which forced the herders to migrate to other regions.

Corroboratively, Abass (2012) posits that the decrease in annual rainfall and shortening of the wet season also adds to the cause of the conflict between herders and farmers. Due to their roaming movement, the Fulani herdsmen are visitors in any farming community in which they temporarily settle.

To Shettima and Tar (2008), the herdsmen are seen as landless group by the community farmers (the landed group) who claim the right to land use and ownership. The herders seek grazing routes for their cattle while the farmers are interested in using the land for cultivation of crops.

A report by Amnesty International Nigeria shows that the refusal of the government and the security forces to act as at when due has also resulted to the escalation of the bloody conflict between the two parties and this recorded a high percentage of 57 per cent in 2017 and 2018. The former Minister of Interior Abdurrahman Bello Dambazau and the Sultan of Sokoto Sa'adu Abubakar noted that these herders that carry guns and causes violence are not Nigerians; to them they are foreigners who are terrorists that come into Nigeria and take advantage of the frequent clashes between herdsmen and farmers to terrorize Nigerians.

### **The Role of the Media in Reporting Conflict**

The media is the fourth estate realm in the society saddled with the responsibility of collecting facts, ascertain such facts and verify the truth behind them before sending it to the public as it is. In performing its watchdog duty, they are not supposed to insinuate, decide or pass judgment on any subject it has not verified well.

Bamidele (2012) noted that the duty of the media during any conflict situation is to give undiluted truth which can help in the process of reconciliation, for this will help to fasten development at any given time. The role played by the media in reporting pure fact or being objective in their report as it concerns conflict should not be neglected because as a voice that offers or give information to the people, they know the direction of any conflict and as such should desist from any form of subjective reports that can only create space for baseless propaganda to thrive.

In reporting a conflict according to Adelabu (2015) there are five major points the media should consider, and these points are:

- i. There should be fairness that is no taking of sides.
- ii. Victims of the conflict should be treated with dignity and respect.
- iii. All the parties involved in the conflict should be respected.
- iv. The views of the sources should be respected etc.
- v. Self-Identity should be practiced.

Research has shown that giving the media an adequate freedom (freedom from being attack by anyone) will promote professionalism, objectivity, unbiased and will successfully help to deescalate the conflict. It is also observed that the local media contributes to restore peace

during conflict by restoring the levels of trust, confidence and self-worth that may emerge from the conflict.

Steven Livingston in his report revealed two key actors during conflict and they are: actors in the position of dominance, they are those who want to limit or stop the media from reporting such conflict and this depends on their position and power while the other actors are the weaker ones who will want to draw the attention of the media for the society to be aware of what is happening.

Sonwalker (2004) noted that the socio-cultural compound of us, them, we and they are a reality in covering conflict by the media and should be handled with care when reporting any conflict.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This section explains the theories that support this study. The Agenda-setting theory and the individual differences theory are explained here:

#### **Agenda-Setting Theory**

Agenda setting theory is one of the media effects theories in the field of mass communication. This theory is credited to Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw based on their seminal study published in 1972. There are certain elements according to Folarin (1998) involved in agenda setting which include.

- a. The frequency of reporting the issue.
- b. The level of importance given to the reports through headlines, display, pictures and layout in newspapers or by tuning on radio or television.

Folarin further stated that the agenda setting theory does not give the media the power to determine what we actually think but it gives them the power to determine what we are thinking about. Baran (2002) supported the above assertion by saying that, the agenda setting power of the media resides more in the amount of space or time devoted to the story and its placement in the broadcast or on the pages of newspaper. The underlying assumption of this theory is its closeness between the level of importance attached to the issue as being publicized in the media by the listeners to those media and the emphasis given by the media (Yahaya, 2003).

#### **Individual Differences Theory**

This theory affirms that everybody is endowed with a peculiar characteristic that affect or determine how we react and be influenced by media messages. This is based on expositions and laboratory experiments on behaviorism, classical condition in learning differences and attitude formation in the late 50's and 60's.

The individual difference theory is said to be based on some assumptions and they are:

1. Human beings are seen to vary greatly in their personal psychological organization owing differential learning.
2. Personality variables acquired from social milieu provide a basis for perceiving a particular event from different perspective and from one individual to another.

3. The principle of selective attention and perception that characterizes the mass audience rather than the notion of mass audience as a homogenous aggregate whose members attend uniformly to whatever message that is directed in their way.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The research design adopted for this study is survey. Survey according to Eze Mark Akunna (2008) is a type of research where the researcher selects a sample of respondents and administers a questionnaire. He further stated that survey is the best method available to social scientist in collecting original data to describe a population that is too large to observe directly. Survey research is relatively cheaper and also allows a researcher to examine many variables like demographics. This method also uses a variety of statistics to analyze its data.

### **Population of the Study**

Population of Abuja as of 2020 is estimated at 3,277,740. Since 2015 Abuja has grown by 836,049 and this represents 6.07% annual change. These population estimates and projections came from the latest revision of the United Nations world urbanization prospects. These estimates represent the urban agglomeration of Abuja, which typically includes Abuja's population in addition to adjacent suburban areas. However, between 2000 and 2010 the population has grown by almost 140%.

### **Sample Size**

Sample size here refers to a part of the population which represent or reflects the opinions, attitudes or behaviors of the entire population. In this study the researcher selected a sample size of 140 respondents.

### **Sampling Technique**

The sampling technique the researcher adopted for this study is simple random technique. Simple random technique helps to avoid subjective bias arising from a personal choice of sampling units and also gives each member of the population equal chance of being selected.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

The researcher adopted the questionnaire as an instrument in this study. Eze Osondu and Agbo Ben (2005) describe the questionnaire as a formalized set of questions for eliciting information. A twenty (20) item questionnaire containing four sections namely: Section A which consists of the demographic attributes of the respondent, Section B contains respondents' exposure to the newspaper under study, Section C contains respondents' exposure to stories on farmers-herders conflict and lastly Section D contains respondents' exposure to national security. The information collected will be used to answer the research questions raised in chapter one.

### **Administration of Research Instrument**

The researcher administered 140 copies of the questionnaire. The exercise was done through face-to-face approach and the essence of face-to-face approach was to enable the researcher to clear any misconception that may arise from respondents in the course of filling the questionnaire.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

The presentation and analysis is based on data obtained from the questionnaire that is administered. The questionnaire is divided into four sections: Section A covers the demographic information or attributes of the respondents, Section B covers the respondent exposure to the selected newspaper, Section C covers respondents' exposure to the stories on farmers - Herders conflicts and lastly section D which covers respondents' exposure to National Security. The responses are presented in a tabular form and expressed in percentages.

Table 1: Demographic Attributes of the respondent

<b>SEX</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE %</b>
Males	95	67.9%
Female	45	32.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>AGE</b>		
21 – 30	59	42.1
31 – 40	54	38.6
41 and above	27	19.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>		
Single	56	60
Married	84	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>OCCUPATION</b>		
Civil servant	60	42.8
Trader	40	28.6
Student	40	28.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION</b>		
Tertiary	62	44.3
Secondary	57	40.7
Others	21	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

**SEX:** Data gathered from field shows that 95 respondents are males which represent 67.9% while 45 respondents representing 32.1% were females. The implication here is that most of the respondents are males. This means that more men read newspaper and contributed more to the study.

**AGE:** Here the respondents who fall between the age bracket of 21-30 were 59 representing 42.1%, those between the age bracket of 31-40 were 54 representing 38.6%, those between the

age bracket of 41 and above representing 19.3%. It shows that the respondent between the age of 21 – 30 contributed more to the study.

**MARITAL STATUS:** 84 respondents representing 60% were married, while 56 respondents representing 40% were single.

**OCCUPATION:** 60 civil servants representing 42.8%, 40 traders representing 28.6% were students.

**EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION:** 62 respondents representing 44.3% were tertiary institution certificate holders, 57 representing 40.7% were secondary school certificate holders, while the 21 respondents that make up the number representing 15% have other qualifications like a Masters degree. This implies that the respondents have a functional level of education to understand the subject matter.

**SECTION B:** This section contains respondent’s exposure to punch newspaper.

**TABLE 2:** How often do you read punch newspaper?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Daily	41	29.3%
Weekly	83	59.3%
I do not read at all	16	11.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data in **table 2** shows that 41 respondents representing 29.3% agreed that they read Punch newspaper every day, 83 respondents representing 59.3% shows that they read Punch newspaper weekly, and 16 respondents representing 11.4% did not read Punch newspaper at all.

**TABLE 3:** The table below shows responses for the question - Would you give Punch newspaper a good score as regards to the level of prominence given to farmers – herders stories?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE%
Yes	114	81.4%
No	26	18.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data in table 3 shows that 114 respondents, 81.4% gave Punch newspaper a good score as regards to the level of prominence they give to farmers – herders’ stories while 26 respondents representing 18.6% scored them low.

**TABLE 4:** The table below shows responses for the question - Where do you see farmers – herders’ crisis more in Punch newspaper

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Front and back page	35	25%
As a supplement	89	63.6%
Editorial page	16	11.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data in table 4 shows that 35 respondents representing 25% said they see it more in front and back page, 89 respondent representing 63.6% attested to seeing the stories as a supplement and 16 respondents representing 11.4% saw it more in the editorial page. The implication here is that farmers-herders crisis appears more as a supplement in Punch newspaper.

**TABLE 5:** The sources of information to punch newspaper on herders–farmers crisis are credible?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE%
Yes	127	90.7%
No	13	9.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data in table 5 shows that 127 respondents representing 90.7% said their sources of information on herders – farmers crisis were credible, while 13 respondents representing 9.3% said their source of information were not credible. This means that punch newspaper in covering farmers-herders conflict get credible information from the right sources.

**TABLES 6:** Punch newspaper takes sides in reporting farmers–herders conflict

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE%
Yes	34	24.3%
No	106	75.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data in table 6 shows that 34 respondents which represent 24.3% agreed that punch newspaper take sides in reporting farmers – herders conflict, while 106 respondents which represent 75.7% said punch newspaper does not take sides in reporting farmers – herders conflict. Here it implies that punch newspaper does not report in favor of any of the parties (i.e., farmers or herders).

**SECTION C:** This section covers respondent exposure to stories on farmers–herders conflicts.

**TABLES 7:** How often do you read stories on farmers – herders?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE%
Daily	19	13.6%
Weekly	89	63.6%
Monthly	32	22.87%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 7 shows that 19 respondents who represent 13.6% read farmers – herders stories daily basis, 89 respondents representing 63.3% read farmers-herders stories weekly and 32 respondents representing 22.8% reads farmers – herders stories monthly. It implies that most respondents read stories on farmers–herders conflict weekly.

**Table 8:** who do you think are the major source of information to punch newspaper?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE%
Security Operatives	21	15%
Victims	84	60%
Community leaders	35	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data in table 8 shows that 21 respondents representing 15% believed that the security operatives are the major people that give information to punch newspaper, 84 respondents representing 60% believed that the victims of this crisis were the major source of information to the punch newspaper, while a total of 35 respondents representing 25% believed that the community leaders were the major source of information to punch newspaper. This implies that punch newspaper gets their information directly from the victims.

**Table 9:** The coverage of herders–famers conflict by the selected newspaper does it support the act of terrorism?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE%
Yes	33	23.6%
No	107	76.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 9 shows that 33 respondents who represent 23.6% agreed that the coverage of herders-farmers conflict by the selected newspapers supports the act of terrorism while 107 respondents representing 76.4% agreed that the coverage of herders-farmers conflict by the selected newspaper did not support the act of terrorism. This means that punch newspaper in their coverage of the conflict between farmers and herders does not in any way support the act of terrorism.

**TABLE 10:** The farmers-herders conflict: is it an act of aggression by one party?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Yes	107	76.4%
No	33	23.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 10 shows that 33 respondents which represent 23.6% says is not an act of aggression by one party while 107 respondents representing 76.4% said it was an act of aggression by one party. This shows that majority of the respondents see farmers-herders conflict as an act of aggression by one party.

**TABLE 11:** do you think the punch reporters get first-hand information from the farmers and herders themselves?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Yes	118	84.3%
No	22	15.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 11 above shows that 118 respondents representing 84.3% agreed that the selected newspaper reporters got first-hand information from the farmers and herders themselves while 22 respondents representing 15.7% did not agree that punch reporters got first-hand information from the farmers and herders themselves. It shows that punch newspaper got their information from farmers and herders themselves.

**TABLE 12:** The herdsmen kill the farmers just because of their crops?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Yes	23	16.4%
No	117	83.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table 12 above revealed that 23 respondents which is made up 16.4% agreed that the herdsmen killed the farmers just because of their crops while 117 representing 83.6% said farmers were not killed just because of their crops. This means that the herdsmen do not kill the farmers just because of their crops.

**SECTION D:** This section covers respondent exposure to national security?

**TABLE 13:** Do you see terrorist motive behind the killing by herdsmen?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE%
Yes	131	93.6%
No	9	6.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data in table 13 shows that 131 respondents represents 93.6% who see terrorist motive behind the herdsmen killings while 9 respondent which represent 6.4% said there was no terrorist motive behind the killings by herdsmen. This shows that there is indeed a terrorist move behind the killings by herdsmen.

**TABLE 14:** would you agree with the allegation that government support and supplies weapons to herdsmen?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Yes	56	40%
No	84	60%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 14 reveals that 56 respondents representing 40% agreed that the government support and supply weapons to herdsmen while 84 respondents representing 60% did not agree to the allegation that government supports and supplies weapons to herdsmen. This means that the government does not supply weapons to the herdsmen.

**TABLE 15:** The security operatives protect the interest of the herdsmen?

<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE %</b>
Yes	43	30.7%
No	97	69.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 15 shows 43 respondents representing 30.7% who agreed that security operatives protect the herdsmen interest while 69.3% ninety (97 respondents) disagreed. This explains that the security operative does not in any way protect the herdsmen interest.

**TABLE 16:** herdsmen and farmers conflict tends to pose a threat to national security?

<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE %</b>
Yes	136	97.1%
No	4	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data in table 16 shows that 136 respondents representing 97.1% strongly agreed that the farmers-herders conflict pose a big threat to national security, while 4 respondents (about 2.9%) says the conflict posed no threat to national security. The implication is that there is a big threat to national security as regards to farmers-herders crisis.

### **4.3 Answering Research Questions**

#### **A. What is the level of prominence punch newspaper gives to the conflict between herders and farmers?**

Data in the table 3 answered this question. The data in table 3 shows 114 respondents, representing 81.4% gave punch newspaper a good score as regards to the level of prominence they give to farmers – herders’ stories while 26 respondents (a total of 18.6%) scored them low. This implies that majority of the respondents scored punch newspaper high as regards to the level of prominence they give to stories on farmers – herders’ conflicts.

#### **B. Who are the major sources of news report to the selected newspaper in reporting herders in reporting herders-farmers conflict?**

The data in table 8 shows that 21 respondents (15%) believed that the security operatives are the sources that give information to punch newspaper, while a total of 84 respondents representing 60% believed that the victims of this crisis are the major sources of information to the punch newspaper, and another 35 respondents a total of 25% believed that the community leaders were a source of information to punch newspaper. This implies that punch newspaper gets their information directly from the victims.

### **C. Does punch newspaper coverage of the conflict between farmers and herders support the act of terrorism?**

Data in table 9 answered this question. The data in table 9 distinctively showed 107 respondents making 76.4% a larger number of the respondents said the coverage of the herders-farmers did not support the act of terrorism.

### **D. Is the crisis between herders and farmers a conflict or an act of aggression by one party?**

Data in table 10 answered this question. The data in table 10 showed that 107 respondents representing 76.4%, said that the farmers-herders conflict was an act of aggression by one party.

## **4.4 Discussion of findings**

The first objective of the study was to determine the level of prominence given to the conflict between herders and farmers in the selected newspaper, the study found out that, punch newspaper gives farmers-herders crisis adequate or the required prominence. Additionally, this study was carried out to ascertain the major source of news reports on herders and farmers conflict, the study revealed that punch newspaper get their source from the victims of the conflict.

The study also sought to establish whether punch newspaper coverage of the herders and farmers crisis glorified or supports the act of terrorism. The finding shows that punch newspaper does not glorify/support the act of terrorism in any way. Furthermore, the study intended to ascertain if the crisis between the famers and herders was an act of aggression or conflict by one party. The study shows that the conflict between the herders and farmers was not an act of aggression by one party.

Finally, the study revealed that the farmers-herders crisis had assumed a natural scope which has posed a security threat to the nation at large.

## **Conclusion**

Consequent upon its findings, this study concludes that the selected national newspaper is diligent in carrying out its surveillance function, gathering and providing timely reports on occurrences of the conflict between herders and farmers. The level of importance Punch newspaper accord to issues like farmers-herders is fundamental to how the public would come to see such issues as important by placing it at the front page of their newspaper. In this study, it was discovered that punch newspaper gave the required attention to the farmers-herders conflict through the frequency of its coverage.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher came up with the following recommendations:

1. There is urgent need for government at all levels and even security operatives to double their efforts so as to offer a lasting solution to the conflict.

2. This study examines only one national newspaper, researchers could increase the scope and focus on the other national newspaper and other media outfit like television, radio.
3. Further research can also compare newspapers from different geopolitical zones so as to know if there is any ethnic agenda and sectional prejudices in their coverage of the conflict between farmers and herders.
4. Another subject of research should be the comparison between print media and broadcast media so as to know if there are any similarities or variations in the patterns they cover the conflict.

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