

# The influence of inter-religious and farmers- herders' crises on the Management of Public Universities in North Central Nigeria

Dyege Clement Akpenpuun, Kajo Didacus T. (PhD), & Tyokyaa Cletus I. (PhD)

*Department of Educational Foundations and General Studies, Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi, Nigeria*

**Abstract:** The study investigated the influence of inter-religious and farmers- herders' crises on the management of public universities in the North Central Nigeria. Two specific objectives with corresponding research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study was 9,708 academic and senior administrative staff in seven Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria. The sample size for the study was 384 academic and senior administrative staff who were drawn using purposive, proportionate stratified and convenience sampling techniques. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Experts validated the questionnaire and its reliability was established using Cronbach Coefficient Alpha Method which yielded a coefficient of 0.87. Data collected for the study was analyzed using Means and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions and Chi-Square Goodness of fit to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings of the study revealed that inter-religious crises have no significant influence on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. The finding however, revealed that farmers-herders' crises have significant negative influence on public universities' management. The study concluded that farmers-herders' crises in North Central Nigeria pose a threat to public universities' management. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the Federal Government of Nigeria should as a matter of urgency, use all security apparatus to ensure that the crises between farmers and Fulani herders come to an end. This can make the management of public universities better strive. The university management should ensure that clear guidelines on religious activities are put in place to avoid spreading religious intolerance and violence which could result in violence on campuses

**Keywords:** Security Challenges, Farmers-Herders' Crises, Inter-religious Crises and Management of Public Universities.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Like many developing countries in Africa, Nigeria has been confronted with diverse forms of security challenges since its independence in 1960. In Nigeria today, there is a concern on the escalating cases of insecurity. Security challenges and the general concern for peace, as everyday experiences show, are part of the realities of life, that human beings in the Nigeria societies grapple with. According to Abimbola and Adesote (2012), since the return of Nigeria to civilian democratic rule in 1999, the country has been facing national security challenges ranging from inter-religious crises

and farmers and Fulani herdsman crises. The high rate of insecurity in Nigeria is stretching the nation to its limits; sometimes constituting a great threat to the very fabric of its existence. It is no longer news that Nigeria is prone to numerous activities that endanger the lives of the entire populace. Security problems are observed to be the order of the day in each geo-political zone of the country. These zones are: North Central (also known as Middle Belt), North East, North West, South East, South South (also known as Niger Delta region) and South West. Each of these zones suffers from one security challenge or the other.

In particular, North Central Nigeria has witnessed an unprecedented level of insecurity. The zone has been plagued with a plethora of security challenges. It can be said that the prevalence of security challenges in this zone could pose a threat to the management of university education. This is because for any nation to educate her citizens for sustainable peace and development, it should be free from security challenges (Igbuzor, 2011). Education in North Central Nigeria, one of the major investment and determinants for economic growth and development, is observed to be confronted with overwhelming security challenges. This could be why Uzuegbu-Wilson (2018) states that in the prevailing circumstances of insecurity, the safety and security of educational institutions and the entire community where the schools are located are no longer guaranteed. Prevalent among these security challenges that could pose threat to the management of university education in North Central Nigeria are farmers and Fulani herdsman crises and religious crises.

Conflicts between farmers and herders can be understood as a problem of access to land. McGregor (2014) states that for decades now conflict between herdsman and farmers has been a reoccurring issue in Nigeria most especially in the North Central States. Different communities in North-Central Nigeria have witnessed and suffered from attacks of herdsman which have led to loss of lives and properties, as victims vacate their homes and take refuge in peaceful neighboring communities for safety. Today, the herders have tactically seized many parts of the states in North Central Nigeria as grazing land for their cattle. Agbo (2020) states that such seizure, has dire consequences for the educational development of the zone. Ahmed (2015) noted that, when farmers and Fulani herders clash in an area, school attendance is adversely affected because many people run

from their places of abode to safer places. In communities nearby university environments where there are prevalent clashes between farmers and herders, the management of such universities could suffer security challenges. For instance in April 26, 2017, the University of Ilorin gave a seven-day ultimatum to herders encroaching on its land to quit the campus, but it was never obeyed (Oyeleye & Adeyemo, 2018). Further, sometime in February, 2018, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State accused herders of poisoning the University's dam with chemicals (New Telegraph Editorial, 2018). Equally, sometime in February 2018, the Vice Chancellor of Plateau State University in Bokokos raised alarm on how deadly herders who entered the University were harassing female students (Ejembi & Gyang, 2018). The Vice Chancellor lamented that, "there are security challenges in the university because the institution has not been completely fenced, we have seen several strange persons within the university who constitute threat to lives and properties". With these reported cases, it suffices to suggest that the farmers and Fulani herdsman crises remain a security challenge that may also affect the management of universities.

Inter-religious conflict is when religious adherents are involved in a serious disagreement or argument between one religious group and another. The conflicts on religious grounds have smeared the relationship of Christians and Muslims in North Central Nigeria. In 2016, the gruesome murder of Eunice Olawale, a Christian preacher by Muslims in Abuja sparked outrage among Nigerians especially between Christians and Muslims which further revealed divides among religious lines (*Sahara Reporters Online, July 11, 2016*). In 2017, armed attacks by Muslim on predominantly Christian communities in Nasarawa State left more than 200 people dead and destroyed homes and farms (Baptist Press, March 28, 2017). The Baptist Press also reports that in 2014, Islamist mercenaries attacked villages in neighboring Benue state, killing five Christians. Brendan (2010) reports that as a result of religious crises in Jos, there is longer-term disruption of attendance of teachers and students, lowering of the quality of teachers, dwindling recruitment of staff, leading to teacher shortages and persistent de-motivation and distraction of teachers and students by fear or trauma thereby reducing the quality of education provision and students' ability to learn. With these reports, one would also be tempted to ask whether inter-religious crises could affect the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Therefore, from the foregoing, North Central Nigeria can be seen as one of the regions in Nigeria that has witnessed a myriad of security challenges. Because of these challenges (inter-religious crises and farmers-herders crises) and their attendant effect on educational institutions in general, one could be right to suggest that the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria may not be without stress from these challenges. This means that the process of planning, organizing and directing activities of the university, effectively utilizing human and material resources to accomplish the university's objectives may suffer a setback.

Because of this, the researchers sought to investigate the influence of inter-religious crises and farmers-herders crises on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers over the years have delved into the influence of security challenges on educational management. Abdul (2011) researched the impact of religious crises on the control of human resources in industries set up in Kaduna State of Nigeria. Findings revealed that, religious crises had some negative influence on the co-operation of staff in the industrial set ups; the level of cordiality was also observed to be affected by the crises; staff co-ordinations for effective job performance was negatively influenced by religious differences, especially after religious crises. Agbo (2020) conducted a theoretical study to investigate the effects of Farmers and Herdsmen Conflicts on the Educational Development of the North-Central Geo-political Zone of Nigeria. The study focused on conflicts between farmers and herdsman in Nigeria's North Central geo-political zone. It was found that the menace of herdsman in Nigeria has resulted in the following, issues of educational development; lack of food production and by implication payment of school fees by parents; acute humanitarian crises which has resulted in dysfunctional educational development; tertiary institutions in the zone have been forcibly turned into grazing fields instead of research institutions and hundreds of school children have been put out of school. Okwori and Angenyi (2019) examined farmers/pastoralists conflicts on the management of primary schools in Benue State of Nigeria. The study revealed that farmers/pastoralists conflicts negatively influenced infrastructural facilities utilization and students' enrolment in primary schools in Benue State to a high extent. Furthermore, Oladunjoye and Omemu (2013) conducted a study on the effect of Boko Haram insurgency on school attendance in Northern Nigeria. The study revealed that insurgent' activities like killings and kidnapping negatively influence school attendance. Atsua and Abdullahi (2015) researched impact of the insurgency on principals, teachers and students in senior secondary schools in Borno State of Nigeria. The results revealed that insurgency activities destroyed the academic calendar, instilled fear and demoralized school children and teachers.

### 2.1 Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is a country with potential for greatness; a large population comprising dynamic workforce, a growing economy, natural resources, raw materials and oil deposits which make her one of the largest exporters of crude oil in Africa. A country like Nigeria needs a good security network that creates opportunities for development and progress. However, despite having in place security agencies like the Nigerian Army, Navy, Airforce, Police Force, Immigration and Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps, the security of lives and properties in Nigeria is negatively affected.

In North Central Nigeria, news reports bombard us daily with grim reminders that the region is falling into a quagmire of perplexing security problems despite the remarkable investment the government has made on security. No day passes without reports of people being killed and properties worth millions of naira destroyed. The increasing rate of crises in North Central Nigeria in recent times is can destroy the nation’s material, financial and human resources, which might have been of assistance to the educational management and development of the country. Due to these, management of universities may be a difficult task since school managers may not know what to do amid the volatile activities found in the schools which make human lives and school properties insecure and exposed to all kinds of risks. It also makes one wonder if the entire country particularly higher institutions’ environments are still safe and manageable for achieving educational goals. In view of these prevailing security challenges, this study sought to ascertain the influence of inter-religious crises and farmers-herders’ crises on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

2.2 Objective of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. determine the influence of farmers- herders crises on the management of public universities in North Central, Nigeria
- ii. determine the influence of inter-religious crises on the management of public universities in North Central, Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- i. How do farmers-herders’ crises influence the management of public universities in North Central, Nigeria?
- ii. How do inter-religious crises influence the management of public universities in North Central, Nigeria?

Statement of Hypotheses

- i. Farmers-herders’ crises has no significant influence on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria
- ii. Inter-religious crises has no significant influence on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study comprises 9,708 academic and senior administrative staff within the seven federal universities in North Central Nigeria. The population was made up of all 4,378 academic staff on Consolidated University Academic Salary Structure (CONUASS) 1-7 and 5,330senior administrative staff on the Consolidated Tertiary Institutions’ Salary Structure (CONTISS) 7 and above. The sample size for the study was 384 academic and senior administrative staff. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane formula. In selecting the sample, purposive, proportionate stratified and accidental sampling techniques were adopted. The researcher employed a structured questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. The questionnaire had two sections, section A and B. The questionnaire was validated by experts in Educational Administration and Planning and Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the questionnaire was established using the Cronbach Alpha method, and a reliability coefficient of 0.72 was obtained. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of Means and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions while the Chi-Square Goodness of Fit test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05level of significance. A benchmark of 2.50 was used to answer the research questions. Items with mean scores of 2.50 and above were agreed while those below 2.50 were disagreed. The decision was based on P-values and Alpha values for the Chi-square test of hypotheses. When  $P < .05$ , the null hypothesis was rejected and considered “Significant Influence” and when  $P > .05$ , the null hypothesis was not rejected and considered “No Significant Influence”.

IV. RESULTS

Research Question 1: How do farmers-herders’ crises influence the management of public universities in North Central, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of responses to the farmers and Fulani herders’ crises in the management of public universities in North Central, Nigeria

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Fear of attacks from herders affect school attendance by staff in my institution	187	131	54	12	3.28	.82	Agree
2	Herdsmen penetration into the university environment often create panic to attend lectures among students	179	152	37	16	3.29	.91	Agree
3	The fear of Fulani herders attack often affect university enrolment in worst hit states of North Central Nigeria	184	143	48	9	3.31	.81	Agree
4	The attacks by Fulani herders in nearby university environment often leave some facilities destroyed	189	139	41	15	3.31	.85	Agree
5	Some projects under construction in universities are often left uncompleted due to fear of attacks from Fulani herders	181	155	36	12	3.32	.90	Agree
6	The university environment is left uncondusive for teaching-learning due to fear of attacks by Fulani herdsmen	185	153	38	8	3.34	.97	Agree
<b>Cluster Mean and SD</b>						<b>3.31</b>	<b>.88</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Data presented in Table 1 revealed that, the respondents agreed to all the items (1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 ) with mean scores ranging from 3.28 – 3.34 which are below the benchmark of 2.50. The data also revealed close Standard Deviation values ranging from .82 – .97 which showed that the responses of the respondents were too far from each other. The cluster mean of all the items was revealed to be 3.31 and SD= .88. With this

cluster mean, it can be deduced from this finding that farmers and Fulani herders’ crises negatively influence the management of public universities in North Central, Nigeria.

*Research Question 2:* How do inter-religious crises influence the management of public universities in North Central, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of responses to the Inter-religious crises in the management of public universities in North Central, Nigeria

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Staff refuses to share offices with their fellows based on religious differences in my institution.	59	89	185	51	2.41	1.00	Disagree
2	Religious crises create mistrust among staff in my institution.	53	78	190	63	2.32	.93	Disagree
3	Students and staff create more information organizations after religious crises that are experienced around and within my institution.	51	118	162	53	2.43	.87	Disagree
4	As a result of religious crises, some appointed members of committees do not cooperate to function effectively as a group in my institution.	51	147	137	49	2.52	.83	Agree
5	Religious crises distort harmonious co-existence in my institution and thismake coordination of human resources difficult.	55	70	162	97	2.22	.94	Disagree
6	In my university, Students tend to cooperate more with leaders of their religious groups.	84	148	98	54	2.68	.90	Agree
<b>Cluster Mean and SD</b>						<b>2.43</b>	<b>.91</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Data presented in Table 1 revealed that, except for items 4 and 6, the respondents disagreed to the other items (1, 2, 3 and 5) with mean scores ranging from 2.22 – 2.43 which are below the benchmark of 2.50. The data also revealed close Standard Deviation values ranging from .81 – .97 which showed that the responses of the respondents were too far from each other. The cluster mean of all the items was revealed to be 2.43 and SD= .91. With this cluster mean, it can be deduced from this finding that inter-religious crises do not have influence on the management of public universities in North Central, Nigeria

*Hypotheses 1:* Farmers-herders’ crises have no significant influence on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria

Table 3: Chi-Square Goodness of fit test of the influence of Farmers-herders’ Crises on Management of Public Universities in North Central, Nigeria

Response Options	Observed N	Expected N	Df	$\chi^2_{cal}$	Sig	$\alpha$ - level	Remark
SA	12	96.0					
A	46	96.0					
D	146	96.0					
SD	184	96.0					
Total	384		3	210.583	.000	.05	Significant

Df = Degree of Freedom;  $\chi^2_{cal}$  = Chi-Square Calculated Value; Sig = P-Value, P<0.05

Table 3 shows the Chi-square calculated value of 210.583, degree of freedom (df) =3 and a sig (P-value=0.000) which is less than the alpha value ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.05. Since P<0.05, the result is significant, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implied

that, farmers and Fulani herders’ crises have significant influence on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria

*Hypothesis 2:* Inter-religious crises have no significant influence on the management of public universities in North Central, Nigeria

Table 4: Chi-Square Goodness of fit test of the influence of Inter-religious Crises on Management of Public Universities in North Central Nigeria

Response Options	Observed N	Expected N	Df	$\chi^2_{cal}$	Sig	$\alpha$ - level	Remark
SA	61	96.0					
A	156	96.0					
D	108	96.0					
SD	59	96.0					
Total	384		3	66.021	.095	.05	Not Significant

Df = Degree of Freedom;  $\chi^2_{cal}$  = Chi-Square Calculated Value; Sig = P-Value, P<0.05

Table 4 shows the Chi-square calculated value of 66.021, degree of freedom (df) =3 and a sig (P-value=0.95) which is greater than the alpha value ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.05. Since P>0.05, the result is not significant, therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that, inter-religious crises have no significant influence on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria



## V. DISCUSSION

The first finding of the study revealed that farmers and Fulani herders crises have negatively influence the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. It was revealed from this finding that, the university environment is left uncondusive for teaching-learning, some projects under construction in universities are often left uncompleted and school facilities are destroyed, leading to management challenges in public universities in North Central Nigeria. A test of a related hypothesis revealed that farmers and Fulani herders' crises significantly influence the management of public universities. This finding agrees with Agbo (2020) findings who found that the menace of herdsmen in Nigeria has resulted in issues of educational development, dysfunctional educational development and tertiary institutions in the zone have been forcibly turned into grazing fields instead of research institutions. The finding also agrees with that of Okwori and Angenyi (2019) who found that farmers/pastoralists' conflicts negatively influenced infrastructural facilities utilization and students' enrolment to a high extent. This finding indicated that the ublic universities' management has been greatly as school facilities and documents are prone to destruction. This finding implies that the farmers-herdsmen conflict in North Central Nigeria has assumed a devastating dimension regarding management of public universities. The incessant destruction of lives and property has created management problems for public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Lastly, the findings of the study revealed that inter-religious crises do not influence management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. From this finding, the respondents revealed that inter-religious crises have not distorted harmonious co-existence in universities, created mistrust among staff and made staff refuse to share offices with their fellows. Hence, they posed no management challenge in public universities in North Central Nigeria. A test of hypotheses confirmed that inter-religious crises do not significantly influence the management of public universities. This finding is at variance with that of Abdul (2011) who found that religious crises had some negative influence on the co-operation of staff in the industrial set ups; the level of cordiality was also observed to be affected by the crises; staff co-ordinations for effective job performance was negatively influenced by religious differences especially after religious crises. The finding also disagree with that of Atsua and Abdullahi (2015) who found that terrorism which came as a result of religion has destroyed academic calendar, instilled fear and demoralized school children and teachers. The present study's findings indicate that the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria is not marred by inter-religious crises. Despite the general belief that inter-religious crises cause disunity among staff, such is not the case as found from the present study. Inter-religious crises do not create an atmosphere of mistrust, fear, anxiety and frenzy in members of the university community.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, the study concluded that, farmers-herders' crises are security challenges in North Central Nigeria that poses a great challenge to the management of public universities. This security challenge has led to significant problem for university management in that if not urgently addressed, can hamper the smooth of running educational activities in North Central Nigeria.

Recommendations were made that:

- i. The Federal Government of Nigeria should as a matter of urgency, use all security apparatus to ensure that the crises between farmers and Fulani herders come to an end. This can make the management of public universities better strive
- ii. The university management should ensure that clear guidelines on religious activities are put in place to avoid spreading religious intolerance and violence resulting in violence on campuses.
- iii. The university management should ensure that regular training and retraining programmes are organized for all security personnel to sharpen their skills and acquaint them with modern trends in intelligent gathering, crime detention and security operation.

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