**EVALUATION OF RADIO AS A TOOL TO END HERDERS-FARMERS CONFLICTS IN MIDDLE-BELT, NIGERIA.**

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**Abstract**

Clashes between farmers and herdsmen have become frequent in Nigeria and in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa. These clashes are informed by herders’ continuous movement with their flock from the more arid northern parts down to the South in search of greener pastures at the commencement of the rainy season each year. Benue State which is the area of this study has witnessed the attacks in remote areas of the northern parts of the State. The study evaluates this influence of radio on the audience in resolving the farmers and herders’ clashes. The researcher sampled the opinion of 400 respondents from across Benue State North Central Nigeria. Data was gathered through questionnaire. P values, mean and standard deviation were used to test the hypotheses of the study. It was discovered that radio messages positively influence and shape the attitude and perception of herders and farmers towards ending the conflict. The study further discovered that the radio despite their prevalent challenges in the State still played significant roles in preventing herder’s and farmers clashes through its educative and informative programmes and it is a medium for the future. The findings show that the level of literacy of the audience has some positive impact on resolution of the conflict. The findings also show that government interference, influence and poor infrastructure impaired journalism practice in Benue State. Recommendations include the need for special training for Nigerian Journalists in the area of conflict and crises reporting.

**Keywords**: Farmers, Herders, Clashes, Benue State, Radio, Nigeria.

**Introduction**

Land is a key natural resource needed by man for his day-to-day existence. All human livelihoods and activities are directly or indirectly dependent on land at varying thresholds. Yet, land is a limited, somewhat scarce resource with both artificial and natural access and usage barriers (Adisa, 2012). This limitation in supply of land has often been linked to clashes between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria. This has become so frequent in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Herdsmen have continuously moved with their flock from the more arid northern parts down to the south in search of greener pastures at commencement of the rainy season each year. These movements of pastoralist with their flocks have continued to precipitate the clashes. The competition for land, water and vegetation by pastoralists and farmers coupled with scarcity of resources and adverse climatic changes have been blamed for precipitating pastoralist-farmer conflicts (Opoku, 2015).

In situating their study, Okoli and Atalhe (2014) remarked that an important dimension of the phenomenon of eco-resource conflict in Nigeria is the rising incidence of herder/farmer confrontation. This appears to be most prevalent and pervasive in the north-central region of Nigeria, which has witnessed the worst occurrences of pastoralist/farmer clashes as a result of livelihood struggles. Nigerian states within this region most affected include Adamawa, Taraba, Niger, Nasarawa, Zamfara and Benue. These clashes in recent times have had a death toll of above two thousand and destruction of property worth billions of naira. However, as Opoku (2015) further observed that pastoralists are the natural custodians of dry land environments. Pastoralism in Africa is mainly attributed to the Fulani ethnic group.

The above underscores the urgency the situation demands that governments in Africa should raise policies that reasonably and proactively address the situation by accommodating both the farmers and herders in more modern and decent ways. However, the bloody attacks on villages in Guma local government Area of Benue state early in 2018 preceding the Agatu massacre the previous year form the main thrust for this study.

Communication is as old as mankind and it is believed to serve as basis for human existence, continuity and development.  A plethora of media forms are used in communication, which can be classified into interpersonal, small group and mass media. The later form of communication (mass media) which is the concern of this study consists of print – such as newspapers, magazines, etc.; electronic – such as radio, television, and the internet, cell phones etc., oral – use of gongs, etc. The electronic media categories are much younger than oral and print media being mainly the products of twentieth century. Radio involves the process by which messages are sent through electrical waves. In other words, sound would be sent and received through the waves (Sambe, 2008).

As Okunna (1987) noted, “Radio appears to be more powerful.  It stands out as having the greater power of reaching the diverse people of the Nigeria nation”. Radio as a medium of mass communication has wider coverage and as the most commonly used medium makes greater impact on the audience. Radio is an electronic device or medium of communication whose reception “is aural”.  Radio utilizes receptiveness or response to our sense of sound and hearing to convey its message to the audience.  It is close to us everywhere especially the transistor type: while taking a walk, at work, in the farm, in the market places, riding a car, on a motor-cycle, on a donkey, while herding cattle etc. Radio has since its discovery remained a major source of information at countryside open fields, in the villages or rural areas.  It lends itself for easy use in informing and educating both the farmers and herdsmen on best practices. This is attributable to the uniqueness of the medium – it is portable, easily affordable and operated even in the absence of electricity. As Agbo and Ukozor (2000) posits, that with appropriateness of programming and well-known audience classification, radio should be directed towards education and national development. In this case, educating both the herdsmen and the farmers on how best they can avoid the incessant clashes. Over the years radio has gained popularity as a unique and effective tool for the provision of information and skills for empowering groups and communities towards national development. Chapman *(*2003) reported that the growth of radio stations reflects both the improvements in information technologies and the shifting of development paradigm towards a more participatory style of information and knowledge transfer. Kumar (2004) identified radio as a forum for participatory communication and as a key to both economic and social development.

A good instance is “You and the Society,” an audience participation programme of Harvest FM Radio Station, Markurdi.Also is the“Issues that Matters” programme presented by Joy FM Radio Station, Oturkpo. Both programmes and stations have been in the lead in providing information on farmer-herder crises. Members of the public have come to depend on these stations as their main source of information on the way forward as well as coping strategies concerning the crises. In many parts of the world today, radio drives the partnership between the community, voluntary sector, Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) Civil Society, agencies, and citizens in promoting national development. Radio stations often serve their listeners by offering a variety of contents that is not necessarily provided by other media and can play a significant role at the grassroots level for rural development.

For instance, other focus for programming apart from the current farmer/herder clashes could be issues of poverty, modern agricultural methods or inputs, gender inequality, education, social problems among others. Chapman *(*2003) found that radio for instance is effective in improving the sharing of agricultural information by remote rural farming communities. Radio in this context provides a set of participatory communication techniques that support agricultural extension efforts by using local languages to communicate directly with farmers and listeners’ groups like the herdsmen; radio can reach them in their own native dialects of the fulfulde for Fulani and tiv language for the Tiv people. Walters(2011) assessed the impact of radio in Indonesia and concluded that effective radio activities can make a significant change in a community’s life.

The media, with specific reference to radio, play a very important role in national development. This role of radio in national development lies in its capacity and capability to teach, manipulate, sensitize and mobilize people through information dissemination (Ucheanya, 2003). The radio also charts a course for the public in line with the agenda setting theory, thereby creating in the minds of the people, issues that should be viewed as priority including development programmes and policies, by doing this radio helps the state in the allocation of resources (Nwabueze, 2005).

Instances of this role played by radio in Nigeria is the general Millennium Development Goals (MDG) pursuit that ended in the year 2015 and now the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as proposed by the United Nations and incorporated as national policy by governments of member countries around the world. Policies of the Millennium Development Goal and SDGs touch on different aspects of health, education, agriculture, children and women and the like. The programme is part of the globalization pursuit to which any nation left out in its pursuit and implementation stands the possibility of being alienated in the comity of nations. However, the persistent clashes between farmers and herders if allowed to continue unabated will be a serious challenge to the realization of sustainable development goals in agriculture and food sustainability, health and education and protection of vulnerable people like women and children. Against this backdrop, this study aims at x-raying the role radio can play in addressing the farmer/ herder conflicts in order not to truncate development in that part of the country.

Radio through its messages just like other media of mass communication performs distinct functions or roles in addressing issues of national and community interest through its informative, educative and persuasive roles. As a result, radio messages can be designed and structured by the local or the rural communities to meet its expression and enlightenment needs. According to Konkwo (2010) and Megwa (2011) the idea of community radio has demystified radio as community dwellers take pride in it and consider it as their own. Alumuku (2006) contends that “radio is emerging as one of the best forms of local community communication.” Such a grassroots communication approach according to Traber (1986) can become an agent for change in religious, socio-economic development, and in the struggle for human rights.

Hence in the face of these persistent clashes between farmers and herders in Benue State and other parts of North-Central and in fact other parts of the country, how has the radio performed in halting these clashes? This calls for the need to interrogate and to reevaluate the role of radio messages in escalating or deescalating a conflict situation. In other words, what role did the radio play or can the radio play through its news, commentaries, and documentary programmes considering the level of violence witnessed at the height of the crises in Benue State?

The study is also guided by the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1**

H0: The “You and the Society” of Harvest FM Radio Station, Makurdi and “Issues that Matters” programme of Joy FM Radio Station, Otukpo are not sufficient for crises prevention and to address the clashes.

H1: The “You and the Society” of Harvest FM Radio Station, Makurdi and “Issues that Matters” programme of Joy FM Radio Station, Otukpo are sufficient for crises prevention and to address the clashes.

**Hypothesis 2**

Ho: The audiences have no high level of awareness of these radio programmes on the herder-farmer clashes in the State.

H1: There is a high level of awareness of the radio programmes on the herder- farmer clashes in Benue State.

**Hypothesis 3**

H0: The messages of the radio programmes on the herder-farmer clashes in Benue State are not suitable towards the resolution of the conflict.

H1: The messages of the radio programmes on the herder-farmer clashes in Benue State are suitable towards the resolution of the conflict.

**Hypothesis 4**

H0: The radio programmes on herder-farmer clashes in Benue State do not have significant influence on the people of the State towards peace-building and the resolution of the clashes.

H1: The radio programmes on herder-farmer clashes in Benue State do have significant influence on the people of the State towards peace-building and the resolution of the clashes.

**Review of farmer-herder conflicts in Benue State Nigeria.**

According to de Haan (2002), ‘destruction of crops by cattle and other property (irrigation equipment and infrastructure) by the pastoralists themselves are the main direct causes for conflicts cited by the farmers, whereas burning of rangelands and fadama and blockage of stock routes and water points by crop encroachment are important direct reasons cited by the pastoralists’. Ingawa, Ega, and Erhabor (1999) reported that the key underlying causes of farmer-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria are: Changing resource access rights, whereby traditional access rights to communal grazing and water resources are being obstructed by the individual tenureship of arable farmers. This is another challenge particularly severe on the traditional trek routes, which become favorite cropping sites because of their better soil fertility resulting from the concentration of animal manure from the trekking herds in these areas. Within the fadama areas, this is exacerbated by the fragmented nature of the crop plots, which makes prevention of animals straying in the crop plots difficult. De Haan (2002) also noted that antagonistic perceptions and beliefs among farmers and herdsmen could compound conflict situation, especially due to failing institutions and fierce competition for resources. Another cause of farmer-herdsmen conflicts is increasing rate of cattle theft which, according to de Haan (2002), is often accompanied by violence.

Other perceived causes of farmer-herdsmen conflicts include inequitable access to land, diminishing land resources, antagonistic values among user groups, policy contradictions, and non-recognition of rights of indigenous people Adisa (2011). These range from economic effects (such as loss of income/resources/yield) to physical (such as home/farm destruction, bodily injury or death of family member) and socio-psychological effects such as emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction (Adisa, 2011). The causes and effects of farmer-herdsmen conflict have attracted considerable theoretical and empirical analyses, but conflict actors and victims’ coping machanisms have not received sufficient attention in the literature (Adisa, 2011).

Tsuwa, kwaghchimin and Iro [2015] opine that, due to climate change variability, Fulani herdsmen migrated from the North-East and North-west to the north central region to tend their cattle with reference to the Iro [1994] account of the annual herding cycle of the fulani, the herding season begins with southward movement of herds along rivers and streams, valley from October to December making the end of rainy season and beginning of dry season.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Conflict Theory**

Hornby (1995), views conflict as a serious disagreement, argument, struggle and serious difference of opinion, wishes or a clash. The threat according to Robinson & Clifford (2012) is directed towards limiting or eliminating the access of one party to some resource or goal. This could be seen in cases of land disputes between crop farmers and grazers in the grass-fields where they share the same environment for farming and grazing. The conflict theory attributes to a society, the characteristics of coercion, division, hostility, dissension conflict, mal-integration and change. Klein & Ritti (1980) stated that, conflict has various components which include; differences in tasks, values, attitudes and goals priorities as groups try to gain control over scarce resources.

According to Ekong (2003), conflict may arise where there is difference of opinion between group leaders or in situations where one group tends to be exploiting the other. Conflict between personalities may lead to group quarrel and division of the community into several factions. Conflict theory, according to Tonah (2006), views constant antagonism over scarce resources as the primary cause of conflict among economic agents. Conflict theorist like, Vanderlin (2005); Ekanola (2004) and Deutsh (1991) argue that, the common features shared among economic agents are: firstly, there is a kind of contact between the parties involved, secondly, the parties in conflict perceive conflicting views and finally, one of the parties always wants to redress existing contradictions.

Every farming system just as the nomadic cattle herding has a boundary, which separates it from the larger system, which make up the environment. The boundary represents the limits in the larger system. According to Akpaki (2002), farmers increasingly compete with nomadic herders for access to farmland, pastures, fresh water and the use of rangeland in general. There is clear demarcation between different types of conflict in farmer-nomadic herder relations. Hagberg (1998) has likewise made a distinction between the various types and stages of conflicts in farmer-nomadic relations. This according to him includes disputes among individuals and groups, conflict of interest and violent conflicts.

**Development Communication Theory**

This study is anchored on developmentcommunication theory also known as development media theory. The development media theory was formulated by McQuail in 1987.This theory seeks to explain the normative behaviours of the press in countries that are conventionally classified together as developing countries. The theory owes its origin to the UNESCO's MacBride Commission set up in 1979. Opposed to dependency and foreign domination and to arbitrary authoritarianism. It accepts economic development and nation building as overriding objectives. Press freedom should be opened to restriction according to economic priorities and the development needs of the society. In the interest of development ends, the state has the ultimate control (Ndolo, 2005).

The theory holds that the media have a role to play in facilitating the process of development in the developing countries. According to the development media theory, the media are to be used to serve the general good of the nation. The media are seen as agents of development and social change in any community thus, the theory says that the media should be used to complement government's efforts by carrying out programmes that will lead to positive behavioural change among the people. The development media theory according to Okunna (1999), accepts that economic development and nation building should take precedence over some freedom of the press and of individuals.

In addition, the theory advocates that the mass media should assist the government in the task of nation building and that government should control the media as well as journalist to achieve this goal.

Summarily, the fundamental tenets of the theory as identified by McQuail

(1987) are:

• Media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy;

• Freedom of the press should be opened to restriction according to economic priorities and development needs of the society;

• Media should give priority in news and information to link with other developing countries, which are close geographically, culturally or politically;

In the farmer and herder clash which is the focus of this study the media this time the radio has the duty to help to build a bridge between these two parties as to foster dialogue that is critical for peace building and mutual coexistence.

There is a robust link between media development and government responsiveness, especially to the poor, who have numerical strength in a democracy but are often ignored by politicians. A media sector that reaches and gives voice to the vulnerable can create informed citizens that can better monitor the actions of incumbent politicians and use this information in their voting decisions. Media improves the efficiency of the economy by providing actors more and better information with which to make decisions and improve stability. Media enhances political coordination in the development of sound economic policy.

Coyne and Leeson(2002) provide clarity on the role of the media in economic development by analyzing the role of media as a coordination-enhancing mechanism in policy development. Their study looked at a number of historic case studies, including successful economic development examples such as Poland and Hungary, and less successful ones including Ukraine. In the successful cases of Poland and Hungary, not only has the media played a role in transforming situations of conflict into coordination, but also access to information which has allowed politicians and the populace to coordinate on good conjectures leading to economic progress.

**Materials and Methods**

The research method adopted in this study is the survey. Survey is a commonly used research strategy in studies that involve selecting individual respondents, asking them questions, analyzing their responses and inferring how the product of such inquiry applies to the entire population from which the sample was selected.

The population of this study are residents of Benue State, they comprise of indigenes as well as non-indigenes from different parts of the country, some of whom are artisans, farmers, traders and civil servants. The entire population of the state is about 4,253,641 according to the 2006 census. The population is clustered mostly at the state capital Makurdi and other principal towns including Gboko, Otukpo, Aliede, Katsina –Ala, Vandeikya and other local government headquarters. There are five radio stations in Benue State, they include; Radio Benue FM Makurdi, Harvest FM Makurdi, Benue State University (BSU) FM Makurdi, Ashi Waves FM Katsina Ala and Joy FM Otukpo.

This study chose a sample size of 400 respondents which were drawn from residents from different communities across the twenty-three local government areas of the state; this is in line with what was prescribed by Meyer (1973) for a population that ranges from 1000 to infinity. To select the 400 respondents for this study, the multi-stage sampling procedure was applied. This involves four stages: the first stage selected all 23 local government areas of the state. The second stage randomly selected a community each from all the local government areas of the state. The third stage also randomly selected a village, an area or street from each of the selected communities. Finally, the fourth stage then selected a total of seventeen (17) respondents from each of the villages, areas or streets already selected making a total of four hundred (400) respondents for the study.

This study employed the questionnaire, and in-depth interview for the collection of primary data. The questionnaire was designed on a five point likert-scale (strongly disagree 1, disagree 2, don’t know 3, agree 4, strongly agree 5) administered to residents of Benue State Nigeria. Four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the sample population by hand.

Qualitative data was collected through interview. A number of five (5) participants were selected from each community and interviewed to elicit further insights on the current as well as the future role of radio in grassroots informational needs especially in handling farmer- herder clashes in the State, thus allowing the participants to talk freely and spontaneously.

α= (n (n-1) × (1-(Σs, 2/s1 2))

Where n = number of items

s12 = variance of ith item

St = total score of variance

In this research study, to use the Cronbach’s Alpha measurement of reliability test, a pre-test study was conducted with a select group of 10 people from the study area to ascertain the sustainability of the items. The findings show a Cronbach Alpha of 0.86 which proves that the instrument is reliable.

Data obtained are arranged in percentages and frequency tables. Each distribution table summarizes the data generated on five-point likert-scale responses. Data generated from the likert-scale calculated value are compared with decision value to see whether the opinions fall on the affirmative or negative side, thereby assisting to also test the hypotheses. Calculated values that are greater than the decision values confirm affirmative answers, while those that fall below confirm that answers are on the negative. Similarly, a calculated value that is greater than decision value will lead to rejection of null hypothesis, while calculated value that is less than decision value will lead to acceptance of null hypothesis where applicable.

Formulae for calculated value-TFX TF

Where F= Frequency

TF= Total Frequency

X = Scale Point

FX = Product of frequency and Scale Point

TFX = Total of Product x Scale Point

Data generated was subjected to further testing and analysis using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) VERSION 16. This assists in testing the Standard Deviation and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Average Mean Score was used to test the hypotheses.

**Data Analysis**

**Table 1: Demographic Data**

|  |
| --- |
| **Response Options Frequencies Percentage** |
| **Age of Respondents** |
| 20-29 84 21%  30-39 48 12%  40-49 128 32%  50-59 116 29%  60Above 24 6%  **Total** 400 100% |
| **Gender of Respondents** |
| Male 219 54.8%  Female 181 45.3%  **Total** 400 100% |
| **Level of Education of Respondents** |
| Non-formal 24 6%  Primary Education 116 29%  Secondary Education 48 12%  Higher Education 212 53%  **Total**  400 100% |
| **Religious Affiliation** |
| Traditionalist 60 15%  Islam 20 5%  Christianity 224 56%  No Religion Affiliation 96 24%  **Total** 400 100 |
| **Occupation of Respondents** |
| Students 140 35%  Farmers 72 18%  Businessmen 24 6%  Entrepreneur 48 12%  Professionals 96 24%  Artisans 20 5%  **Total** 400 100 |

**Source: Field Survey, 2024-2025.**

**Research Hypotheses**

**HYPOTHESIS 1**

**H0**: The “You and the Society” of Harvest FM Radio Station, Makurdi and “Issues that Matters” programme Joy FM Radio Station, Otukpo are not sufficient for crises prevention and to address the clashes.

**H1**: The “You and the Society” of Harvest FM Radio Station, Makurdi and “Issues that Matters” programme Joy FM Radio Station, Otukpo are sufficient for crises prevention and to address the clashes.

SA 70

A 200

DA 70

SDA 60

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| FX | (5)SA | (4)A | (3)DK | (2)DA | (1)SDA |
|  | 70 | 200 |  | 70 | 60 |
|  | 350 | 800 |  | 140 | 60 |
| 400 |  |  |  |  |  |

**Source: Field Survey, 2024-2025.**

TFX/FX = 1350/400 = 3.375

The Decision rule states that a value of 3points and above shows that the results are affirmative and hence the alternate hypothesis is thereby accepted and the null hypothesis is thereby rejected. Hence with a value of 3.375 the result indicates that radio programmes on herder-farmer clashes in Benue state are sufficient to address the impasse.

**HYPOTHESIS TWO**

**H0:** The audiences have no high level of awareness of these radio programmes on the herder-farmer clashes in the state.

**H1:** There is high level of awareness of the radio programme on the herder- farmer clashes among the citizens of Benue State.

SA – 24(5)

A - 204(4)

DK - 24(3)

DA – 48 (2)

SDA – 96(1)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | SA(5) | A(4) | DK(3) | DA(2) | SDA(1) |
|  | 24 | 204 | 24 | FX 48 | 96 |
|  | 120 | 816 | 72 | 96 | 196 |
| 400 |  |  |  |  |  |

**Source: Field Survey, 2024-2025.**

**TFX/FX = 1200/400 = 3.00**

According to the Decision rule, a value of 3 points and above shows that the result is in the affirmative and hence the alternate hypothesis is thereby accepted and the null hypothesis is thereby rejected. Hence with a value of 3.0 the results show that there is high level of awareness of the radio programme on the herder- farmer clashes among the citizens of Benue state.

**HYPOTHESIS THREE**

**H0:** The messages of the radio programmes on the herder-farmer clashes in Benue State are not suitable toward the resolution of the conflict.

**H1:** The messages of the radio programmes on the herder-farmer clashes in Benue State are suitable toward the resolution of the conflict.

SA 24

A 256

DK 24

DA -48

SDA 48

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| FX | SA(5) | A(4) | DK(3) | DA(2) | SDA(1) |
|  | 24 | 256 | 24 | 48 | 48 |
|  | 120 | 1024 | 72 | 96 | 48 |
| 400 |  |  |  |  |  |

**Source: Field Survey, 2024-2025.**

TFX/FX = 1360/400 = 3.4

According to the Decision rule, a value of 3 points and above shows that the result is in the affirmative and hence the alternate hypothesis is thereby accepted and the null hypothesis is thereby rejected. Hence with a value of 3.0 the radio programmes on herder-farmer clashes in Benue state are suitable to address the impasse.

**HYPOTHESIS FOUR**

**H0:** The radio programmes on herder-farmer clashes in Benue State do not have significant influence on the people of the State towards peace building and the resolution of the clashes.

**H1:** The radio programmes on herder-farmer clashes in Benue State do have significant influence on the people of the State towards peace building and the resolution of the clashes.

SA 72 (5)

A 24 (4)

DK 156 (3)

DA 84(2)

SDA 72(1)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| FX | SA(5) | A(4) | DK(3) | DA(2) | SDA(1) |
|  | 72 | 24 | 156 | 84 | 72 |
| TFX | 360 | 96 | 468 | 168 | 72 |
| 400 |  |  |  |  |  |

**Source: Field Survey, 2024-2025.**

**TFX/FX = 1164/400 = 2.91**

According to the Decision rule, a value of 3 points and above shows that the result is in the affirmative and hence the alternate hypothesis is thereby accepted and the null hypothesis is thereby rejected. However, in this the result the value is 2.91 which is lower than 3 points therefore the alternate hypothesis is rejected and the null is accepted that radio programmes on herder-farmer clashes in Benue state do not have significant influence on the people of the state towards the resolution of the conflict.

**Discussion of Findings**

The first issue considered according to the first hypothesis of this study is the sufficiency of radio programmes in Benue State in addressing the farmer-herder clashes. The results show that the radio programmes are sufficient. This point is in line with the position of Yakasai (1996) when he remarked that “The responsibility of informing people about development projects and programmes is another major role of the radio in national development. Such programmes designed and proposed by policy makers could be entirely new to the people for whom they need to be enlightened, educated and mobilized by the media”. Similary, Odunewu as cited by Yakasai (1996), emphasized that “The radio leads to formation of attitude through establishing of values for the society or nation and thereby building a climate of change in the society or nation. Accordingly, this involves the dissemination of news and information in response to a basic human need, especially the “right to know”.

The level of literacy of the audience also has a great degree of positive impact on conflict resolution generally; hence it is useful in the resolution of the farmer-herder clashes in Benue State, Nigeria. This view is supported by Odunewu (cited by Yakasai 1996:41), stressing the importance of education to rural development and in this case halting the raging crises in the rural areas he opined that this involves the dissemination of news and information in response to a basic human need. Linking right to know with development in the view of Rodney (1973, p.6) It implies increased skill, and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, and responsibility and material well-being. According to Asemah (2010), development is a process of change in attitude, social structure and general acceleration of economic growth, through reduction of poverty and inequality.

Result from the second hypothesis shows that there is high level of awareness of the radio programme on the herder- farmer clashes among the citizens of Benue state. Radio messages positively influence and shape the attitude and perception of herders and farmers towards ending conflict as a result of the awareness created by radio. This supports the argument of Okunna (1987) when she noted that radio appears to be more powerful. According to her the radio stands out as having the greater power of reaching the diverse people of the Nigeria nation. Radio as a medium of mass communication has wider coverage and as the most commonly used medium makes greater impact on the audience.

The study further discovered according to the third hypothesis that the radio programmes on herder-farmer clashes in Benue state are suitable to address the impasse. The radio despite their prevalent challenges in the state still played significant role in preventing herder’s and farmer’s clashes through its educative and informative programmes. It is also in line with Chapman(2003) who found that radio for instance is effective in improving the sharing of agricultural information by remote rural farming communities. Radio in this context provides a set of participatory communication techniques that support agricultural extension efforts by using local languages to communicate directly with farmers and other listeners’ groups like the herdsmen; radio can reach them in their own native dialects of the Fulani language.

In reference to hypothesis four, however, with a decision value of 2.91 which is lower than 3 points therefore the alternate hypothesis is rejected and the null is accepted, that radio programmes on herder-farmer clashes in Benue state do not have significant influence on the people of the state towards the resolution of the impasse. This is not unconnected to the upsurge in the use of GSM Phones.

From study findings, privately owned media were more critical than government owned radio stations especially radio stations owned by the federal government. This may have been responsible for Joy Fm station which is privately owned to be singled out as the most outstanding radio station as far as meeting the taste of the audience and addressing the herder/farmer conflict in the state is concerned.

It’s therefore safe to note that unnecessary government interference may impair journalism practice in Benue State. This must have informed Yakasai(1996) when he remarked that to show their loyalty operatives of government owned media prefer to have their lead story carrying big portrait of the governor or president on the TV screen or front page of their newspaper. Similarly, privately owned media often have governors, ministers and commissioners as friends of the media owner, as a result the helpless reporter willing to report facts or expose an act of dishonesty committed by any of these public office holders could not have his story published or aired because it crosses their (media owners’) personal interests. Thus underpinning the import of ownership as a critical factor in studying media effects

**Other Findings of the Study**

The first issue that respondents interviewed stressed was the issue of the need for special kind of training for Nigerian Journalists in the area of conflict and crises reporting. They maintained that it was necessary to enable them retool and increase their capacity in coverage of the crises and similar crisis in the future. They added that the same training was also needed in other parts of the country experiencing similar crises. It is also necessary for them to be as equipped as their counterparts in other parts of the world.

It was also discovered that poor infrastructure especially accessible roads to the interior parts of the State is another major challenge in reaching the remote parts of the state. This according to them constitutes a major obstacle in effectively reporting the various theatres of the crises.

Another issue was that radio signals of some of their choice local stations do not reach some parts of the hinterland. As a result it is difficult to carry the people along and give them necessary information to navigate the current crises situation they are faced with. In this some of the radio stations simply do not have the capacity as well as the modern equipments needed for digital radio broadcast. Some still use analogue systems in programming.

Yet another area of concern to the Journalists is the area of staff remuneration. In many of the radio stations workers are paid poorly and this affects their morale in the field. Added to this is that in many of the radio stations both government and privately owned some journalists are casualised. They work like full staff but at the end of the day they are paid stipends or allowances as the case may be. This was the view of Bijuade(1987) when he stressed that lack of adequate remuneration and protection for media practitioners by the media managers often lead to suppressing of facts and succumbing to collection of gratification (the notorious “brown envelope” syndrome) in order for the reporters to have their ends met or pay for transportation and facilities for sending their stories.

There is an ongoing biometric data capture of all serving journalists in Benue State, this is done with support from the state branch of Nigerian Union of Journalists. This is a step in the right direction. There is need to know who actually is a journalist, this is necessary to guide against infiltrators.

Many of the journalists interviewed expressed concern over lack of life insurance policies for their members whose families are left to suffer in the case of losing their lives in the course of duty. They maintained that such policy will empower them the more to do their job.

Then is the freedom of information Act. This act is intended to empower the Journalist and give right as well as freedom to legitimately seek for Information from sources in the pursuit of overriding national interest.

**SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the radio plays a very important role in national development cannot be overemphasized, radio programmes of privately owned radio stations have maintained the lead in providing information for people. However despite the upsurge in the use of GSM phones and Social media in the hinterlands and remote villages the study established that people still needed the radio to authenticate information from the social media. This is majorly due to user generated content (UGC) of the social media. The strength of radio in national development lies in its capacity and capability to teach, manipulate, sensitize and mobilize people through information dissemination. The above role of radio makes it very useful in curtailing, the ongoing clash between farmers and herders. The radio also chart a course for the public in line with the Agenda setting theory, thereby creating in the minds of the people, issues that should be viewed as priority. The development media theory of the press (radio) sees national development as priority. Therefore the radio should help in this case the two parties involved in the conflict the farmers and herders by showing the way forward

Radio is still a medium for the future, there is still great potential of what the radio can do in resolving the current crises between farmers and herders and conflict resolution in general. The radio drives national issues including development programmes and policies this is in line with the Development media theory. The theory advocates that the mass media should assist the government in the task of nation building and that government should control the media as well as journalist to achieve this goal.

However, none of these factors are the same everywhere, at all times, or under all conditions. The study discovered that even under this civilian dispensation radio stations owned by the government especially federal government were less critical in their comments or messages. So ownership remains a very important factor in determining media content which over time affects their influence on the audience. Other factors, such as technology, the target audience and the message, may influence the extent of impact on the society.

Summarily, the fundamental tenets of the development media theory as identified by McQuail (1987) are:

• Media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy;

• Freedom of the press should be opened to restriction according to economic priorities and development needs of the society;

• Media should give priority in news and information to link with other developing countries, which are close geographically, culturally or politically;

**Recommendations for further research**

1. There is need for special kind of training for Nigerian Journalists in the area of conflict and crises reporting. This is necessary to enable them retool and increase their capacity in coverage of the crises. The same training is also needed in other parts of the country experiencing similar crises.
2. Improvement of general infrastructure especially accessible roads to the interior parts of the state is another major challenge in reaching the remote parts of the state
3. Improvement of the quality of radio signals as well as capacity of some of radio stations to enable them reach some parts of the hinterland. Also needful is the full digitization of the programmes of the radio stations in Benue State and by extension all over Nigeria to enable them produce modern quality programmes for broadcast.
4. Analogue programming and broadcast should be fully discarded.
5. Staff remuneration should be taken more seriously. When journalists are paid poorly this affects their morale in the field. There should be a legislation banning casualisation of workers in Nigeria.
6. The ongoing biometric data capture of all serving journalists in Benue State should be encouraged the same thing should be replicated in other parts of the country.
7. There should be comprehensive life insurance policies for all practicing journalists. This will give protection to their families who are often left to suffer in the case of losing their lives in the course of duty.
8. Then is the freedom of information Act. This act should be strengthened through amendments to give it more legal muscle to empower the Journalist and give them right as well as freedom to legitimately seek for Information in the pursuit of overriding national interest.
9. Effective regulation of grazing and farming activities in Benue State through efficient land-use laws/legislations and administration;
10. creation of grazing reserves and dedicated grazing routes in order to solve the issue of herd’sencroachment on farmlands and vice versa;
11. Mitigation of desertification and drought in the far North by the government, communities and individuals in order to forestall mass movement of pastoralists towards the north-central belt;
12. Sensitization of stakeholders – farmers and herdsmen alike – on the need for mutual co-existence and peace; this would help to forestall needless provocations and opportunistic violence;
13. Sedentarisation of grazing through ranching in order to regulate practice and foreclose clashes between herding and farming communities.
14. Many Journalists still find it difficult to access information even with the coming into effect of the Freedom of Information Law. This could also serve as an area for further research. For instance how has the freedom of information bill promoted qualitative journalism practice since passed into law?

Then is the issue of the media owners’ interest which often contradicts factual news reporting. The journalist is faced with two opposing and challenging interest to satisfy. He needs to draw a line between loyalty to his employer and satisfying the appetite of his audience or market with authentic news reports. This again is another area for further research.

The study has shown that farming provides an important contribution to household income. Many farmers continue to draw their income from farming activities. However, the conflicts in the study area have significantly affected incomes and food production. Since the conflicts started, farmers’ average income has substantially reduced. This has resulted in their inability to pay children school fees and loans they took from the bank. Many farmers also abandoned their farms owing to the conflicts and are now in Internally Displaced Peoples (IDP) camps.

The study also observed that policies pursued by successive colonial and post-colonial governments in Nigeria have tended to neglect the needs of pastoralists. There is no detailed policy that seeks to regulate pastoral livelihoods. This has exacerbated problems and insecurities of pastoralist and sedentary farming communities, particularly in relation to access to scarce natural resources. Whilst some international policies (example the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance) exist that advocate for the protection of pastoralists’ rights to land and water through clearly demarcated areas, these policies lack legal force and implementation, whilst competing activities, such as wildlife conservation and agriculture are given legal force.

In line with the Ravenstein theory that developed the “Laws of Migration” (1889) using the census data from England and Wales (1889). The thesis of his theory is anchored on the premise that migration was governed by a “push –pull” process. The push-pull process indicates that, unfavourable conditions in one place (oppressive laws, heavy taxation, environmental constraints etc.) “push” people out, and favourable conditions in an external location “pull” them out. Revenstein’s laws stated that the primary cause for migration was better external economic opportunities; hence the main explanation for the migration of herders down to the southern parts of the country is majorly attributed to the harsh environmental and economic conditions up north.

Developing economically and environmentally sound policies are not enough and attention must be given to providing laws to support such policies. Laws enabling secure tenure and ownership of land have been implemented with little regard for the needs of nomadic pastoralist and sedentary farming communities. In the study area, nomadic communities have tended to rely on communal grazing rights, which are not protected by law. Planners over the years have also neglected pastoral livelihoods in their planning schemes. In addition to this, pastoralists are inadequately represented in national and local decision-making processes, allowing their interests and concerns to be unduly neglected in development.

They are marginalized in many communities making them hostile and also limiting their scope for participating in structures for conflict prevention and dispute settlements.

State structures must ensure that there is adequate representation of pastoral group the Meyiti Allah and representatives of the farmers at both local and national decision making and their groups well integrated into the local system. This will encourage more dialogue and better understanding

Future studies should look at why government has not been able to implement the ECOWAS Protocol on transhumance in the country. Although Nigeria ratified the protocol, it has not lived up to its obligations, such as facilitating the integration of incoming migrants.

The government has failed to create corridors for the Fulani to pass through, to designate grazing reserves or encourage the development of ranches, to install boreholes and to set up veterinary outposts. Consequently, the Fulani have to rely on themselves in obtaining access to land and other natural resources.

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