



PERSPECTIVE AND RELATIONSHIP QUESTION OF INTRACTABLE FARMER-HERDER CONFLICTS IN GHANA, AFRICA

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Abstract

Cultural factors underpin most of the intractable farmer-herder conflicts in Africa, as in Ghana. Nonetheless, these factors gained limited scholarly attention. This paper examines the infamous farmer-herder conflict in the Asante-Akyem District of the Ashanti Region. Four hundred respondents cumulatively were randomly and purposely selected in a mixed study design. A cross-tabulation was ran to determine the extent to which differences in nationality, religion, norms, values, and stereotyping played roles in the conflict. The study found that; 94.7% of farmers, 88.7% of herders, 87.9% of middle persons' group, and 83.3% of chiefs and cattle owners respectively, agreed that the differences in these variables are the prime cultural factors that have sustained the conflict and impeded its resolution. The study recommends a re-socialisation of Fulani herders and their host communities by conflict experts and other stakeholders through workshops to foster healthy co-existence in their diversities.

Key Words: Farmer-Herders, Conflict, Cultural Variabilities, Intractability, Resolution

Introduction

In Africa, many scholarly works have been done to establish the possible causes of the numerous farmer-herder conflicts which have bedevilled the continent. Notable among these conflicts are farmer-herder conflicts in Central Nigeria (Chiamogu & Chiamogu, 2020), farmer-herder conflicts in Central Cameroun (Awazi & Avana-Tientcheu, 2020), farmer-herder conflicts in Mali (Priehodová et al., 2020), farmer-herder conflicts in Central Africa (Mwamfupe, 2015), and farmer-

herder conflicts in Southern Sudan (Adeoye, 2017). The emerging idea from these studies is that the compromised roles of mediators, the politicisation of conflicts, corruption on the part of authorities and security agents, mistrust, the quest for vengeance, and defective government policies cumulatively, have complicated the resolution of these conflicts, making them intractable (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC, 2016).

For instance, Ijirshar et al's (2015) study aiming at the causes and effects of the intractable farmer-herder conflicts in Benue State of Nigeria found that between 2015 and 2018, the conflicts displaced over 28,175 farmers and 1,595 Fulani herders. Their study further revealed that women were sexually abused and there were 128 cases of mass rape and 97 cases of military sexual slavery. Enu-Kwesi and Tuffour (2010) noted that these conflicts are the prime cause of misery and underdevelopment on the African continent. According to Springs (2020), intractable conflicts remain unresolved for a long time and occasionally assume violent character. These conflicts, as noted by Zartman (2019), are often entangled with a complex set of historical, religious, cultural, political, and economic issues, as well as multiple actors. Matters in contention are so central that each party resists any attempts at their reduction or devaluation and often refuse to negotiate or compromise concerning such issues, fuelling mutual fear and attack (Hogg, 2016).

Like some countries in Africa, Ghana, over the years has been battling with many devastating farmer-herder conflicts (Bukari et al, 2020; Yembilah & Grant, 2014; Agyemang, 2017; Tonah, 2007). The intractable nature of these conflicts is principally attributed to improper democratic structures, political and economic competition over land, government interference, and compromised positions of traditional chiefs (Anamzoya & Tonah, 2012; Awedoba, 2009). Apparently, the literature is silent on the role of cultural variabilities of the conflicting parties which often make these conflicts intractable (Zartman, 2019; Idowu, 2017; Bösch, 2017). Idowu's (2017) study which involved 457 participants revealed that the insecurity in West Africa for instance is caused by the peril of nomadics. The study found that this situation has been aggravated and protracted by a prevailing attitude of governments to overlook the root causes of the conflicts which are wrapped in ethnicity, cultural variabilities, and religion.

It is against this background that the infamous intractable farmer-herder conflict in the Asante-Akyem North District (AAND) in the Ashanti Region of Ghana was purposely selected with the

view to interrogate the cultural factors underpinning the conflict. This administrative District has witnessed prolonged conflict relationship between farmers and Fulani herders since the late 1990s (Agyemang, 2017). Seemingly, efforts at various levels to end the conflict either through the court and the Agogo Traditional Council (Agyemang, 2019) have not yielded the desired outcome. Due to this, the District now has one of Ghana's most ubiquitous, damaging, and unresolvable farmer-herder conflicts.

Agyemang's (2017) study which aimed at exploring the causes and consequences of the farmer-herder conflicts in Agogo found that the conflict has remained intractable because the chiefs who held land in trust for their people leased part of such lands to the herdsmen under tranquil transactions which were never disclosed to the natives. Such deals as he noted, silenced the capacity of the traditional chiefs to mediate objectively in disputes involving the herdsmen and the local farmers. Tonah's (2007) study involving 180 participants which aimed at exploring the causes of the farmers-herdsmen conflict in the Ashanti Region, earlier found that the economically beneficial relationship between the chiefs, the middlemen, and the Fulani herdsmen on one hand, and the interest of influential Ghanaians who owned cattle, on the other hand, ensured the continuous stay of the herdsmen in the Region. Thus, making farmers-herdsmen conflict in the Region intractable. Whilst these findings are quite helpful, both Agyemang (2017) and Tonah's (2007) studies failed to consider how the mutual stereotypes and perceptions held by both farmers and the Fulani herdsmen (Bukari et al. 2020; Bukari & Kuusaana, 2018) which are grounded in their cultural trappings have contributed to the intractability of the conflict. This research aims to bring a different dimension to this body of knowledge by examining the cultural factors underpinning such an intractable conflict. It is envisaged that the findings will enable stakeholders to fashion out a comprehensive policy targeting the resolution of intractable farmer-herder conflicts in the country which have undermined the livelihood of most agrarian

communities which depend on crop and animal farming (Marfo et al; 2019).

Theoretical consideration

This study is anchored on Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory. The Social Identity Theory posits that group solidarity makes members of a group closely knitted to each other by shared values, social beliefs, norms, and cultural practices and creates a certain level of distinctiveness with the other group. Social identity is the self-conceptions shared by members of the same group or category (Forsyth, 1999). In this vein, group members may have a false sense of unique importance and self-esteem and attempt to distance themselves from the members of the other groups. In-group members as termed by Brown (2020), may hold prejudices or biases against other groups. This makes in-group members challenge the values, norms, and belief systems of other groups. In this regard, whenever a member of their group is hurt, they mobilise to support and defend the member because whatever affects a member, presumably affects the entire group.

The Social Identity Theory explains that people have an inherent fear of out-group members and stereotypically associate them with negative attributes. The fear of out-group members becomes intensified when individuals perceive themselves to be especially vulnerable to harm (Bochatay et al., 2019). Thus, people become suspicious in the presence of unfamiliar out-group members (Arceneaux, 2017).

Nkrumah-Pobi and Owusu-Afriyie's (2020) descriptive survey study involving 305 participants drawn from farmers and herders, Muslims and Christians in Accra-Ghana, found traces of negative perceptions held among the adherents of these religious groups, grounded in their religious beliefs. The study revealed that Christians perceive Muslims as impatient and violent in nature, while Muslims on the other hand, see Christians as exclusivist. According to the Social Identity Theory, our knowledge and emotional attachment to our group memberships, in this case, religious groupings, have implications for our well-being and behaviour (Brown, 2020). Besides, our group memberships

provide us with a sense of self-esteem. Thus, a positive view of our own group depends in part on comparisons to other groups.

Moritz' (2010) qualitative study in Cameroun, found that the variance in values and norms was one of the foremost causes of the conflict between Aghem farmers and Fulani herdsman. His study revealed that while the Aghem people considered argumentation and denial of wrongdoing as disrespectful and disingenuous, the Fulani herders, on the other hand, considered it as a part of a negotiation process. To them, when you deny wrongdoing, it does not mean you are not guilty but it is rather critical in the negotiation process where the wrongdoer may not have to pay for all damages done. Moritz' (2010) study concluded that such behaviour had always angered the Aghem women and brought about conflicts between them and the Fulani herders. Ikhuoso et al.'s (2020) qualitative study involving farmers and herders in the Sahel regions found ecological factors as well as cultural variances (different norms and value systems) as the cause of the conflicts.

The application of the Social Identity Theory to the farmers-herdsman conflict in the study locality could explain the intractability of the conflict. While the farmers are united by a common nationality, occupation, and kinship, the herders are united by a common language, occupation, and religion. The possibility of these identifiers playing out in the conflict is very high. Each group may have the goal to protect its identity and might act negatively or violently to prevent the other groups from undermining their rights, values, and norms as espoused by Hogg (2016). The theory, therefore, suggests that the perception of out-groups as potential source of danger is a self-reflection grounded in individual prejudices. This makes in-group-outgroup conflicts such as farmer-herder conflicts very intractable and destructive generally in nature.

Methodology

Research Design The mixed method design was adopted in this study. This design enabled the

researchers to compare both quantitative and qualitative responses from the respondents of different backgrounds and thus, provided grounds for validation of responses.

Profile of the study locality

Agogo is the administrative capital of Asante Akyem North District (GSS, 2021). The District is bordered by Kumawu in the North, Kwabre East in the East, Kwahu East in the South, and Sekyere East in the West. It has a land mass of about 1125.69 sq. km (Kuusaana & Bukari, 2015) with a total population of 68, 186 as of 2021 (GSS, 2021). The main ethnic groups in the District are the Akans with other economic migrants mainly from the northern part of Ghana (Agyemang, 2017). Agriculture employs over 72.7% of the total population (GSS, 2021) of which many people are into subsistence farming where they cultivate mainly plantain, maize, watermelon, cassava, yam, and palm trees.

Target population and sample size

The study targeted farmers, traditional chiefs, herders, livestock owners, and vegetable farmers (Kuusaana & Bukari, 2015). The District has a wet and fertile ground that supports crop cultivation and animal rearing throughout the year. This has over the years led to a clash of interests

between the market functionaries who buy either farm produce, animals, or both for resale, government officials, and conflict experts. The researchers' decision to target such categories of people stemmed from the fact that they have an interest in the lands within the Asante-Akyem District, and or are either affected by or at least involved in the conflict and its resolution in one way or the other.

Given the diverse nature of the population, to be able to determine the sample size for the study, the Cochran formula was adopted. As noted by Kothari (2004), the Cochran formula is appropriate in determining a sample size of a target population if it is either unknown or infinite, or large. This justified the choice of the Cochran formula in this study as captured below:

$$n = \frac{z^2 \times P(1 - P)}{E^2}$$

Where 'n' is the required sample size;
 'Z' is the Z-score value corresponding to the level of confidence;
 'P' is the standard deviation or estimated proportion/prevalence of attribute that is present in the population;
 'E' is the Margin of Error (Confidence Interval or Level of Precision).

Considerations for the choice of parameters for computation of sample size are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Parameters for Computation of Sample Size

Parameter	Choice	Reference
Z (Z-Score)	1.96	In social research, typical level of confidence is always at 95% (0.05: a Z value equal to Z=1.96, Taherdoost (2017)
P (Standard Deviation or Estimated Proportion)	50%	Crossman (2017) suggests researchers should use 50% or 0.5 as an estimate of P because this will result in maximisation of variance and produce maximum sample size.
E (Margin of Error)	5%	In social research, 5% margin of error is acceptable (Taherdoost 2017)

Source: Taherdoost (2017)

Substituting the selected parameters into Cochran's formula, $n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{(0.5)^2}$
 $n = 384.1$
 $n = 385$ respondents.

In coming out with the 385 respondents, a pilot study was done to ascertain the number of communities affected by the conflict and the actors involved. Residents of those affected communities were targeted because they had first-hand information and experience about the causes

of the conflict and its intractable nature. The target population was segmented into farmers, herders, indigenous cattle owners, middlemen and chiefs. A list of farmers who were affected by the conflict was obtained from the executives of the Asante Akyem North Farmers Association, an umbrella association that comprises all the other farmer associations within the District. A list of all Fulani herders resident within the District was also solicited from the *Ardo* (Chief) of Fulanis within the District and validated by the Veterinary Officer in the District. The list of indigenous cattle

owners was also obtained from the Executives of the Indigenous Cattle Owners Association (ICOA) within the District. The list of middlemen was also obtained from the Association of Livestock Traders in the District. The list of all chiefs and sub-chiefs was obtained from the Agogo Traditional Council. The various lists constituted sampling frames for the segmented groups. A quota of 20% was assigned to each segment and a simple random sampling technique was used to select respective participants from each stratum as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Sampling Procedure

Stratum	Sample Frame	Quota percentage	Sample Size
Affected Farmers	570	20	114
Herders	490	20	98
Indigenous Cattle owners	360	20	72
Middle Men	310	20	62
Chiefs	195	20	39
Total	1875	20	385

Source: Field Data, 2020

Additionally, 15 key informants from different backgrounds were purposely selected. These categories of people were selected due to their in-depth knowledge about the subject matter and their critical role in addressing the conflict.

Table 3: Summary of Key Informants

Identity	Number
West African Network for Peace Building (WANEB)	1
Divisional Police Commander at Konongo,	1
Municipal Police Commander at Agogo	2
Asante Akyem North District	1
Immigration Office at Agogo/Konongo	1
Veterinary Doctor at Agogo,	1
Office of the Ashanti Regional Minister	1
Accident and Emergency Unit at Agogo Presbyterian Hospital	1
Agogo Traditional Council	1
<i>Ardo</i> (Chief) of Fulanis in the Asante-Akyem Municipal	1
Conflict Expert and a Lecturer	1
Ashanti Regional Security Council	1
Agogo Municipal Security Council	1
Ministry of Food and Agriculture	1
Total	15

Source: *Researcher's fieldwork*

Data Sources and Instruments

Data for the study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. A face-to-face

interview with the aid of a structured questionnaire and audio device was employed to gather primary data from 370 respondents. An

in-depth interview with the aid of interview guides was employed to gather information from a further 15 key informants. Besides, a focus group discussion was conducted with three farmer groups of five discussants each at Bebume, Nyamebekyere, and Abrewapong. Six field assistants helped in the administration of the questionnaire.

Primary data were adequately complemented by secondary information generated through the review of books, journals, magazines, periodicals, dissertations, newspapers, government reports, and the internet.

Data Analysis

Two levels of analysis were carried out. Quantitative data were analysed using basic statistics and the information presented in tables, figures and percentages. Qualitative data on the other hand were analysed using thematic analysis. The data were first transcribed and edited to make it more meaningful and precise. Qualitative results were triangulated with the quantitative results before the final interpretation and inferences were made. The theories and empirical works that were reviewed were revisited to see how they contradict or corroborate the findings of the study.

Validity of Research Instruments

To ensure validity, the test items were critically reviewed and validated by the researchers. A pre-testing of the test items (a pilot study) was conducted at Wench and its environs in the Brong Ahafo Region which in recent times is battling with farmer-herder conflicts. This was done to correct any ambiguities if any. The researchers ensured that the (interview) questions covered all the dimensions of the research topic in the best manner. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected,

analysed and the results triangulated before the final interpretation was done. This provided grounds for validation.

Results and Discussions

We began the analysis with the background information of the respondents in terms of their gender, age, and educational status. We considered these characteristics of the respondents as necessary as they tend to influence understanding of farmer-herder conflicts and their resolution as witnessed among the people of the study community.

Gender and age distribution of the respondents

The study was conducted with 400 participants. Out of this, 275(68.8%) respondents were male, while female respondents were 125 representing 31.2%. There were more male participants than female participants. This is because more men than women belonged to the farmers and the herders' group from which majority of the respondents were selected. Nonetheless, the results showed that females were fairly represented in the entire target group.

In this study, only people who were eighteen years and above were selected to participate. This respondent age group was considered to be fairly mature to understand the issues that surrounded the conflict and could express exactly how they have been affected by the conflict and the roles they played in the conflict and its resolution. The results showed that majority of the participants were within the age bracket of 29-38. This is because most of the population of the study locality is dominated by the youth as indicated in the 2021 census (GSS, 2021). Besides, most of the migrant farmers in the study communities, especially, those from the Northern and Volta Regions are normally the youth. The results are captured in Table 4.

Table 4: Age of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-28	73	18.2
29-38	116	29.0
39-48	103	25.8
49-58	46	11.5
59 and above	62	15.5

Source: Field Data, 2020

Religious Affiliation of Respondents

The study found that 205(53%) respondents were Christians. A further 147 respondents representing 38% were Muslims. Those who adhered to the African Traditional Religion were 33, representing 9% of the total respondents. No Fulani herder practiced Christianity and very few farmers (12/114) were Muslims.

Cultural underpinnings and intractability of farmer-herder conflicts

To determine the cultural underpinnings of the conflict's intractability, we first established from the respondents that the conflict in question can indeed be termed intractable, before proceeding to establish the cultural reasons for its intractability.

Leshem (2017) argues that any conflict that exists for over ten years could be termed intractable. The information gathered from the respondents suggests that the farmer-herder conflict in Asante-Akyem North District precisely, the Agogo community has lasted for over ten years and is frequently characterised by violence and destruction. The emerging theme is that many approaches including the court and the Agogo Traditional Council have attempted to resolve the conflict but it remains persistent. This makes it fit into the architecture of what scholars describe as an intractable conflict.

When the respondents were asked to indicate if the farmer-herder conflict in Agogo community

is intractable, 275/385 respondents (71.4%) affirmed the assertion. These respondents cited the long duration of the conflict (264/275), the seemingly fruitless efforts that have been made in resolving the conflict (266/275), the re-current and the occasional escalatory nature of the conflict (245/275) as indicators of its intractability. A key informant agreed with the assertion and explained the intractability of the conflict during an interview in January 2020 as follows:

'The Fulani herders came into this area around the 1990s. Since then, their relationship with native farmers has been that of conflict. The first violent confrontation between the Fulani herders and our people happened in 2001 when a Fulani herdsman shot and killed a farmer on his farm because he resisted their request to graze on his crop residues after harvest. The conflict has since been reeling on till now. For now, the Fulani herdsman have moved to Mantukwa and its catchment communities, still in this same District. This conflict has persisted for over twenty years and is yet to be meaningfully resolved.'

A cross-tabulation was run to determine the extent to which various groups that participated in the research agree to the cultural causes of the conflict. A cross-tabulation analysis is shown below in Table 5.

Table 5: Distribution of Responses across occupational group

Occupation	Differences in Nationality	Differences in Religion	Differences in Values and Norms	Stereotyping	Averages	Percentages
Farmer	114(100.0%)	112(98.2%)	108(94.7%)	98(85.9%)	108	94.7
Herders	90(91.8%)	89(90.8%)	72(73.4%)	98(100.0%)	87.2	88.7
Middlemen	62(86.1%)	54(75.0%)	47(65.2%)	58(80.5%)	55.25	89.1
Cattle Owners	54(87.0%)	44(70.9%)	51(82.2%)	55(88.7%)	51	82.3
Chiefs	32(82.0%)	33(84.6%)	34(87.1%)	31(79.4%)	32.5	83.3
Total	352(91.4%)	332(86.2%)	312(81.0%)	340(88.3%)		

Source: Field Data, 2020

As indicated in table 5 above, there was a certain level of unanimity in the responses across the various occupational groups. All the occupational groups agreed that variance in nationality, religion, norms, and values and stereotyping explain the conflict in Agogo. Averagely, 94.7% of the Farmers group agreed that the differences in nationality, religion, norms, and values, and stereotyping are the cultural causes of the conflict. 88.7% of the herders' group agreed to it as well. Some 89.1% of the Middle persons group also agreed that the same variables explain the conflict in Agogo. Almost all the Chiefs (83.3%) also agreed that these same variables explain the conflict. Further 83.3% of the cattle owners also agreed that differences in nationality, religion, norms, and values as well as stereotyping explain the conflict. In all, 91.4% (352/385) of the respondents were of the view that differences in nationality was a factor in the conflict, 86.2% (332/385) link the conflict to differences in religion, 81.0% (312/385) implicate differences in values and norms in the conflict, while 88.3% (340/385) attributed the conflict to group stereotyping.

Differences in Nationality

The analysis revealed that variance in nationality is one of the variables that explain the conflict relationship between farmers and the Fulani herders in the Agogo community. Fulani herders are considered aliens by many Ghanaians (Bukari et al., 2020). This conception about the Fulani herders often makes people more hostile towards

them and any act by them or their animals attracts more anger than the same act committed by locals or animals belonging to locals. Napogbong et al (2020) observed that in many African countries as in Ghana, citizenship is by blood other than birthplace. A person construed as a citizen by birth should belong to one of the Ghanaian ethnic groups or should come from one of the sixteen Regions of the country. According to Whitaker (2020), 14% of the adult population in Ghana is of foreign origin. He wrote that many of the locally-born "aliens" are children of recent immigrants. Nonetheless, a quarter of the adult population had their parents or grandparents settled in Ghana many years ago (Whitaker, 2020). A key informant who was an Executive member of the *Agogoman Mma Kuo*; a group that calls itself concerned citizens of Agogo, corroborates this in an interview as follows:

'The Fulanis are not from here neither are they Ghanaians. Why should we sit down and allow these foreigners to invade our lands, destroy our farms and kill our people?'

This suggests the Fulanis are perceived as non-Ghanaians and could therefore not compete with the indigenes over land resources. This corroborates the work of Chiamogu and Chiamogu (2020). Their study found that the imagery of citizenship together with politics and resource scarcity explains the intractability of the farmer-herder conflict in Central Nigeria. Yembilah and Grant's (2014) case study involving 51 farmers and 45 herders found that farmers in the Northern Region of Ghana felt Fulani herders were foreigners and had no right to grazing fields

in an environment where natural resource access and use rights are tied to common property principles. In another study involving 160 respondents, Johnson and Taofik (2017) found that the persistence of herders in Central Nigeria is related to mainly territoriality and citizenship where Fulani herders are perceived as being aliens and non-indigenes and as such have no claims to any parcel of lands in Central Nigeria. As the Social Identity Theory espouses, given these cultural differences, a minute act from a Fulani herder is more likely to be magnified by farmers who wear the lens of citizenship. This could explain the intractability of the farmer-herder conflict in the Agogo community. This also suggests why all 114(100%) farmers and 90(91.8%) Fulani herders believed that differences in nationality are a major contributory factor to the intractability of the conflict. Across all segments, 352(91.4%) agreed that differences in nationality were a major factor accounting for the intractability of the conflict.

Differences in Religion

According to Nonterah (2016), religion shapes the worldview of many people across the globe. The study found three main religions that had adherents within the District namely Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion. This finding suggests that sharp religious divisions could play a background role in the farmer-herder conflict in the study locality, even though religious diversity according to Marfo et al. (2020), should not necessarily be a basis for clashes between various religious faiths. It is in this regard that religion is viewed as a double-edged sword, in that it has the propensity to foment conflict and at the same time promote peacebuilding and reconciliation (Marfo et al., 2020; Lagho & Bonaya, 2016).

The study revealed that the variance in the religions of farmers (98.2%) and herdsmen (90.8%) in the study communities partly explains the conflict relationship between farmers and herders. The fact that each group sees the other as not belonging to its group makes them less willing to let go of some incursions by the other. This finding corroborates the work of Li (2018). Li's study involving 304 respondents revealed that

differences in religions of farmers and herders in Benue State of Nigeria were one of the major causes of the conflict. Aderayo's (2020) study similarly found that religious variance and resource scarcity were the major causes of the conflict in Central Nigeria. In another study in Bamenda, Cameroun, Ami-Nyoh and Lang's (2016) study involving 110 respondents revealed that differences in religious orientations which have culminated in different conceptions of clean and unclean meat have been the principal cause of conflicts between hunters and Fulani Muslims in the Bamenda grass fields.

The finding of this study, however, contradicts that of Nkrumah-Pobi and Owusu-Afriyie's (2020) descriptive survey involving 305 participants drawn from Farmers and Herders, Muslims and Christians in Accra, Ghana. Their study found that Muslims and Christians have coexisted peacefully. They, however, admit in their conclusion that there are traces of mutually negative perceptions held among adherents. Nkrumah-Pobi and Owusu-Afriyie's (2020) concluding finding is a manifestation of how different religious orientations regardless of its magnitude could create barriers between religious adherents of various faiths.

Differences in Norms and Values

Values are things collectively conceived as good, desirable and proper. They underscore what people in a given culture prefer and what they consider as important and morally right (or bad). Values thus serve as criteria for judging the actions of others (Schaefer, 2005). The study revealed that the variance in norms and values explains the conflict relationship between farmers and herders in the study district. One of the respondents, a sub-chief of an affected village explained:

“The Fulanis who are here don't respect our ways of doing things. We have our customs and traditions that give respect to married women. You cannot come and play with another man's wife and disrespect our culture. When they destroy our farms and are invited for negotiation and peaceful settlement, they don't show up. They have no respect for our chiefs and elders. Why

should we tolerate them here? They have to leave”.

The information above indicates that the farmers and Fulani herders have different approaches to norms and values. While the indigenes (farmers) culturally uphold their chiefs in high esteem, the Fulani herders seem not to place premium on this cultural practice. The herders may have different conceptions for not attending to the call of a chief, which is simply calculated as gross disrespect to authority by the farmers. This finding corroborates that of Moritz (2010). His study found that values differentials between indigenous Aghem farmers and migrant Fulani herders have been a major cause of farmers-Fulani herders' clashes in Cameroun. Ikhuoso et al.'s (2020) study equally found that Fulani herders often come into conflict with farmers in the Sahel regions because many farmers live along organized social structures with norms and values which are diametrically opposed to that of the Fulani herders. This finding, however, is at variance with that of Bukari's (2017) work which found that farmers and Fulanis at Gushegu had built mutually beneficial and symbiotic relations through positive social interactions that led to cross-cultural fertilisations. Thus, the indigenes have entrusted Fulanis with their cattle who in turn use bullocks to plough and prepare farmers' land for planting.

Bukari's work (2017), as opposed to the finding of this study, may suggest that mere differences in norms and values should not serve as a basis of violent encounter. When parties in conflict find compromised bridges to their differences, they could still coexist amidst their value differentials.

Group Stereotyping

Forsyth (1999) conceives stereotypes as socially shared generalizations about the people who are members of a particular group or social kind. He noted that social categorisation makes it possible for people to distinguish between members of their group and that of others. This enables us to make hasty judgments about people based on their group membership without any recognition of individual differences. The analysis shows that stereotyping is a contributing factor in explaining

the conflict between the farmers and herders in the study community. Across all the occupational groups as captured in Table 5, 340(88.3%) respondents link the conflict to group stereotypes. In Ghana, discussions about Fulani herders are often characterized by certain culturally constructed images which are generic and sometimes prejudicial (Bukari et al., 2020). Fulani herdsmen are associated with armed robbery, rape, and murder, and are described as being uncivilized, brutal, and unfit for acceptance into human societies (Bukari et al., 2018). As gathered from the study one *Ardo* key informant - the Fulani equivalent of a chief- explained:

“It is true that some of our people, especially our youth are fomenting troubles. The truth is that not every Fulani is a troublemaker. I believe other ethnic groups have few deviants as well but the people here assume that all Fulani herders are rapists, armed robbers, and thieves. They project us as bad and this informs their attitudes towards us. At some point, we are treated like wild animals”.

Agyemang's (2019) study found that the name 'Fulani' instigate different negative reactions among Ghanaians, particularly in the Southern sector. In a survey involving 320 participants, he found that many farmers in Agogo accused Fulani herders of robbery, rape, and many other criminal activities.

During a Focus Group discussion with three groups of five discussants each at Bebumbe, Nyamebekyere, and Abrewapong, the participants who were farmers expressed this stereotype about Fulani herders. All fifteen participants indicated that the Fulani herdsmen normally attack them on their market days on their way from Agogo main market after selling their farm produce. When the researchers asked if any of the participants had been personally attacked and robbed by Fulani herders, only two people answered in the affirmative. A check at the Agogo Police Station by the researchers confirmed that some incidences of robbery were reported. The Police, however, indicated that the few suspects who have been arrested had both natives and Fulani herders as gang members. The information gathered from both the police and the 15 discussants could

suggest that the indigenous farmers view Fulani herders from a particular lens. In this way, whenever a Fulani herder is sighted, such imageries begin to play out. This has affected the relationship between farmers and Fulani herders in the study locality.

Conclusion

In this study, a cross-tabulation was run to determine the degree to which differences in nationality, religion, norms, values, and stereotyping have been implicated in the intractability of the conflict. It was found that all the variables strongly explain the intractability of the farmer-herder conflict in the Agogo community. As the Social Identity Theory has espoused, this study found that there is considerable evidence for intergroup discrimination grounded in the cultural trappings of the conflicting parties. The study concluded that the differences in religious orientations, stereotyping, and value systems have created a widening gap of group misconception between the Farmers and the Fulani herders. This has fed into how they respond to any disagreement situations and relate to one another in the Asante Akyem North District.

Policy Implication

The study found that Fulani herders are hardly integrated into their host communities due to cultural variability. The study recommends that conflict resolution experts should collaborate with the Asante Akyem North District Assembly to help in re-socialising both the Fulani herders and their host communities through seminars, workshops, and public education so that the two feuding groups can co-exist in their diversities. Besides, the security situation in the locality has to be beefed up by the police to prevent avoidable violence. This could also help deal with criminals who would take advantage of the vulnerable situation.

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