



FUDMA International Journal of Social Sciences (FUDIJOSS)

Vol. 5, No. 1 April, 2025

ISSN: 2735-9522 (Print) ISSN :2735-9530 (Online)



FUDMA International Journal of Social Sciences (FUDIJOSS), Volume 5, No. 1, April, 2025

**A Publication
of The Faculty of Social
Sciences, Federal University
Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State,
Nigeria**

ISSN: 2735-9522 (Print)
2735-9530 (Online)



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Publication fee is ₦ 30,000 or 150 (USD).

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2023 Christmas Eve Attack in Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State: Dynamics,
Impact and Policy Suggestions

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ABSTRACT

The paper explored the dynamics surrounding the Christmas Eve attacks in the Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State. The study carefully unravelled the intricacies surrounding the age-old conflicts, with key attention on the silent triggers and drivers of predatory conflict that have bedevilled the flanks of Plateau State, with specific references to Bokkos Local Government Area. Unknown to previous studies, analyses, and reports, global warming and climate change induced intractable conflict, which inevitably led to mistrust, disdain, mutual suspicions, and conflict among the two land-user groups whose sources of livelihood are directly affected by climate change vulnerabilities such as shortage of rainfall, heat waves, drought, and desertification. These directly or indirectly threaten the livelihoods of both the agrarian communities and nomadic pastoralists in Plateau State and its fringes. The paper adopted multi-methods of data collection. Primarily, with the aid of a Kobo Collect data survey tool, the study used closed-ended questionnaires and explored related literature from published reports by government departments and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), etc., in eliciting relevant data. Because of the concentration of the target population in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps, a convenience sampling technique was utilised in accessing the respondents for this research. Thus, a unit of four hundred (400) IDPs, comprising men and women of adult age not below 18 years old, were identified as those who were in the right state of mind to attend to the researchers at the time of the study. Eighty (80) questionnaires were administered to this population. To this end, simple percentages, Chi-square, linear regression, and ANOVA were used in analysing the data. The study discovered that the severity of the attack was occasioned by the struggle for survival as a result of shifting climate patterns and that women and children suffered the most among other high casualties. Thus, the paper recommends that climate-resilient infrastructures, ranches for pastoralists, and strengthening local security networks should be the topmost priority of the government.

Keywords: Dynamics, Impact, Effect, Policy and Local Government

Introduction

Nigeria's insecurity situation has, over the years, degenerated from insular inter-group conflicts to a generalised, complex, and multifaceted security crisis that knows no bounds, with varying



manifestations and consequences on peace, unity, and development. The hitherto relatively peaceful communities have in recent times been bedevilled by social, political, and economic tendencies that aggravate already existing drivers of violent conflicts whilst also increasing the severity of emerging ones. Of particular threat to the security situation in the country have been the activities of non-state armed actors and criminal gangs of varying antecedents and hard-heartedness (Mohammed, 2024).

Concerning Plateau State, it is a region richly blessed with numerous resource potentials ranging from a favourable climate for rearing animals, and nutritional pasture for domestic animals, among others; however, it is plagued by incessant security challenges. Issues like religious conflict and farmer-herder conflicts are most intermittently occurring, leaving thousands in difficult conditions and obstructing growth and development, especially in rural areas.

In recent times, the dynamics of insecurity in most rural settings of Plateau State can be said to be rooted in politics, resource scarcity, changing climate conditions, a rise in population, and unprecedented competition for land and water resources. Thus, available literature describes these trends and dynamics of violent conflict in rural Plateau either as environmental conflict, land-use conflict, or natural resource conflict. However, more often than not, violent conflicts in Plateau State are usually misconstrued as a significant manifestation of stereotyping tendencies which manifest through ethnicity, class, and religion, with less regard to the historical underlying factors that might have caused the conflicts.

Historically, the escalation of violent conflict in rural communities of Plateau State before 2015 can be linked to the mass exodus of nomadic Fulani herders along designated grazing routes that penetrated regional and national borders, which have been taken over by farmlands and urban infrastructure, among other developments. It is imperative to highlight that the farmer-herder conflict in Plateau State is a departure from the historical ethno-religious crisis that inundated the landscape of Plateau North and South local government areas from 2000 to 2015.

However, it is instructive to note that there is no one-size-fits-all explanation for the causes of insecurity in most of the rural communities in Plateau State because those factors causing and driving conflicts in the localities often overlap and are disguised to mean different things from the actual. Mohammed (2024) succinctly framed that a particular cause of insecurity may be religious, but its hidden motives could be ethnic or political. Violence could also manifest economic factors as triggers, but its dynamics could easily transform it into ethnic or religious violence and vice versa. This is equally the case when conflicts start as political and their unfolding dynamics eventually portray ethnic, tribal, or regional factors or other idiosyncrasies.

From a quick view of the nature, character, and manifestation of violent conflicts in Plateau State and its rural communities, struggles for survival caused by fast-diminishing natural and agricultural resources have triggered and continue to drive conflict in the region. According to Ajibo, Onuoha, Emmanuel, Obi-Keguna, Christy and Okafor (2018), the competition between farmers and herdsmen has often turned into serious hostilities and social friction in many parts of Nigeria. The conflicts have demonstrated a high potential to exacerbate insecurity and food crises, particularly in rural communities where most of the conflicts are localised.



Equally, the persistent farmer-herder conflicts have several mutative factors that can be considered as the dynamics of the conflict. These range from anonymous killing of human beings through violent attacks, cattle rustling, ethnicity and polarisation of the conflict, framing and criminalising of identity management approaches, giving the conflict some religious colouration, portraying the bad ones among the herders as Muslims and the farmers as Christians. Hence, ethnicity and religious chauvinism have permeated the fabric of many security analysts and victims of attacks, and indeed the media, misleading Nigerians alike to the extent that genuine attempts to solve the problem of national security are ethnically or religiously interpreted and misinterpreted for selfish political, religious, and ethnic gains (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2020).

This paper examines the activities of the 2023 Christmas Eve attacks to empirically explain the dynamics, drivers, impact, and implications of the coordinated attacks on innocent and defenceless citizens in Bokkos Local Government Area.

Statement of the Problem

The need to fathom the silent underlying factors responsible for the intractable conflict in rural communities of Plateau State, about the 2023 Christmas Eve attacks in Bokkos Local Government, is the fundamental urge for this study. Unknown to a plethora of previous studies, a decline in the quantity and quality of resources such as water and pasture from the land is the core driver of the protracted conflict in the Middle Belt flank and fringes of Plateau State, to be precise. The linkage of the prolonged conflict, farmers and herders, religious discord, and ethnic rivalry is some of the mutually reinforcing factors usually perpetrated by centrifugal elements whose stock in trade is to deepen the existing fault lines in the state. The attacks in Bokkos LGA have tremendous humanitarian consequences on the dwellers, pushing thousands to settle in Internally Displaced Persons Camps (IDPs) as refugees in their ancestral land, with women and children having the highest impact. New dimensions of the attacks would be fathomed by establishing linkages and relationships by way of overlapping tendencies of variables and factors, such as land grabbing, scarcity of resources, climate change, migration, ethnic rivalry, etc., would be tested to determine whether they caused and also motivated the violent attacks.

Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the pattern of the Christmas Eve attacks on communities within Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State.
2. To explore the underlying factors and drivers contributing to the Christmas Eve attacks on communities in Bokkos Local Government Area.
3. To analyse the broader implications and repercussions of the Christmas Eve attacks in Bokkos Local Government Area.

Theoretical Premise of the Dynamics of Christmas Eve Attacks in Bokkos LGA

The fragility of a nation stems from the state's inability to monopolise the instrument of violence and failure in its ability to constructively, decisively, and frontally address the myriad of insecurity outfits otherwise known as non-state armed actors. This negligence has, over time, plunged the country into complex threat conditions. Kwaja (2024) asserts that the prevailing security threats in



Nigeria are not only complex and dynamic but also a nebulous mix that conflicts with understanding and remediation.

What makes a state a failed one or functioning? Lambach, Johais, and Beyer (2015) use the Weberian concept to “disaggregate statehood into three dimensions of state capacity: making and enforcing binding rules, monopolising the means of violence, and collecting taxes.” If a polity has these abilities, then it is a functioning state.

Gros (2011) established a taxonomy of state failure into types I, II, III, and IV. In type (I), the state loses control over maintenance and war-making. It is no longer able to keep law and order among its citizens. This loss of control implies that the state has collapsed or become anarchic, meaning that there is no longer authority. Type (II), the state loses control over internal order. The state is in a pre-collapse condition, but it still retains the ability to launch a war. Type (III), the state lacks control over the strength to wage war but has strong control over its internal order. In state failure type (IV), the state lacks control over both internal order and war-making, but this loss is neither complete nor permanent.

A critical examination of the state failure typology, state failure (IV), captures the Nigerian scenario with specific reference to the protracted violence in Plateau State. Examining the position of Jega (2023) cited in Mohammed (2024), type IV situates Nigeria as a state that maintains order in some places, especially the capital city and other urban centres, at least minimally, but has failed to do so in some other parts, most especially in rural areas. What is central here is that this type of state failure is not a state collapse but a failed state.

The experience of rural communities in Plateau State showcases the inability of those responsible for protecting lives and property, as aptly captured in Section 14 (1) of the 1999 constitution, to demonstrate capacity in upholding the core reason for their legitimacy. This failure breeds and aids the activities of non-state armed actors, as seen in the 2023 Christmas Eve attacks.

This theory is relevant and applicable based on its promises and sense of hope embedded in it, which, according to Mohammed (2024), typology IV recognises the fact that there may come a time when a state may overcome the current security challenges and assert its will and reclaim internal security. However, this is dependent on the ability of the state to retool its security administration and reconfigure its security architecture to reflect local peculiarities in combating crimes and criminalists, with a deliberate emphasis on rural communities.

Literature Review

The inevitability of conflict is a historical fact that is not in doubt. Many countries in the world have passed through turmoil and subsequently overcome the challenges of violent conflict. This is not unconnected with many African countries, and Nigeria, to be specific. In recent memory, Nigeria has contended with numerous ethnic, religious, communal, and electoral violence, associated with untold casualties, the majority of which are women and children. These uprisings were handled by successive governments based on their peculiarities and complexities.

However, since the obvious depletion of the Lake Chad Basin and the merciless confrontation with climate change effects, the dimension and dynamics of conflict have drastically changed from the

long-standing ethno-religious violent conflict to environmentally induced conflict, particularly in North-Central Nigeria and Plateau State and its environs.

It is on this basis that this paper suggested that the most appropriate way of explaining the Christmas Eve violent attacks on rural communities of Bokokos, Mangu, and Barkin-Ladi is through the prism of a contest for survival induced by environmental degradation occasioned by climate change.

In the works of Homer-Dixon (1994, 1996), he argues that a growing population will likely result in scarcities of renewable resources. At the same time, the amount of high-quality agricultural land will decrease, as well as the extent of renewable forests. The widespread depletion and degradation of aquifers, rivers, and other water resources, either from human-induced stress or from climate change, has the potential to produce violent conflicts. This scenario is most applicable to countries where institutional capacity for adapting to environmental stress is weak.

Homer-Dixon (1996) further identified three (3) pre-conditions of scarcity that he views as fundamental in creating conflict:

1. Decreased quality and quantity of renewable resources.
2. Increased population growth and increased per capita consumption.
3. Unequal resource access across local populations.

Given these preconditions, studies by Homer-Dixon further reveal two processes that can produce conflict:

1. Ecological marginalisation, and
2. Resource capture.

Contextualising and domesticating the pre-conditions and processes that can spark violent conflict in rural Plateau, it is not surprising that the situation and scenarios surrounding the Christmas Eve attack on 24th December 2023 apply to the postulations of Homer-Dixon, with specific reference to decreased quality and quantity of renewable resources in the state.

Blench (2004) further explained that conflict over access to resources is common throughout Nigeria, especially now that the population is so large. Similarly, as herders are under pressure to find land to settle where there is greener pasture and veterinary treatment for their animals, they are constantly trying to find space to enter new zones.

Given the occupation of the natives in rural Plateau, with specific reference to Bokokos, which is subsistence farming, and also the occupation of their opposing party, who are largely nomadic herders in constant search for lush green pasture for their cattle, it is safe to say conflict is inevitable in the light of declining quantity and quality of renewable resources in the semi-arid region of Plateau State and its environs.

As a corollary to the above statement, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2021) asserted that farmer-herder conflicts in North-Central Nigeria have become protracted

conflicts, rooted in competition over resources like land and water. Additionally, Plateau and Benue states largely bear the brunt of these disputes, which have intensified as desertification and population growth place greater strain on limited resources. These conflicts have led to significant loss of life, property destruction, and displacement, further worsening the socio-economic conditions of already struggling rural communities.

Thus, the central thesis of this argument is that scarcity of renewable resources can, in combination with other social factors, contribute to violent conflict.

As a result of the preceding submission, Hauge and Ellingsen (1998) observed that:

As people's quality of life diminishes due to a decrease in environmental resources, such as fertile land, there is the tendency that competition may ensue over the scarce resources; such competition if unchecked could turn fierce.

Therefore, equating the violent Christmas Eve attack on agrarian communities in Bokkos LGA, given the microscopic and macroscopic analysis of the attack, one can see the clear footprints of competition for scarce resources between farming communities and nomadic herders. This further underscores the relationship between climate change, competition for resources, and conflict across Plateau State.

Because of this, Vahyala (2021) states that weak security governance has paved the way for the worsening corporate existence of Nigeria as a political entity. As a result, violent conflict, poor farm yields, frequent migration, displacement, and increased Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have become the symbol of North-Central Nigeria, with Benue and Plateau as the epicentre of the ugly landmark.

Increased environmental scarcity caused by one or more of these factors is assumed to have several consequences, which in turn may lead to domestic armed conflict. Important intervening variables between environmental scarcity and conflict are decreased agricultural production, decreased economic activity, migration, and a weakened state.

Based on Homer-Dixon's Model, we formulate the following hypothesis:

1. Countries experiencing land degradation are more likely to experience domestic armed conflict than countries where land degradation does not take place (H1).
2. Deforested countries are more likely to experience domestic armed conflict than countries not deforested (H2).
3. Countries with low freshwater availability per capita are more likely to experience domestic armed conflict than countries with high freshwater availability per capita (H3).
4. Countries with high population density are more likely to experience domestic armed conflict than countries with low population density (H4).
5. Countries with high-income inequality are more likely to experience domestic armed conflict than countries with greater income equality (H5).



Aside from the resource-based competition that aided the continuous violent conflict in Bokokos, ethnicity and religious discord between the two major religions in the state have been a serious matter of contention for decades. Issues are more often than not largely misconstrued to reflect ethnic or religious dimensions. This is one of the biggest conflict dimensions in the state. Mohammed (2024) also asserts that the causes and interpretation of insecurity are not a watertight compartment because they overlap and often produce a combination of agencies and actions that, in the final analysis, showcase the influence of a society's structure as their basis. A particular cause of insecurity may be religious, but its hidden motives could be political. Violence could also manifest economic factors as triggers, but its dynamics could easily transform it into ethnic or religious violence and vice versa. This is equally the case when conflict starts as political, and its unfolding dynamics eventually portray ethnic, tribal, or regional factors or other idiosyncrasies.

According to CSW (2024), ethnicity generally correlates with religion: ethnic minorities are invariably also religious ones. Consequently, the attacks by non-state armed actors with sophisticated weaponry assume an ethnoreligious colouration and increasingly constitute forcible displacement, as the ancestral lands of indigenous communities are frequently occupied after communities flee to safer areas.

The above analysis underscores the fact that no single type of conflict arises independently of the influence of the other factors. Mohammed (2024) supports this view by saying that the causes of contemporary insecurity in Nigeria overlap and more often intersect with internecine forces that fan the embers of conflict and evolve into different dimensions of threats to national integration and development.

Methodology

A Survey Design was adopted for this study. These techniques allowed the researchers the chance to investigate the situation in Bokokos LGA, as it directly affects the population under study. Eighty (80) individuals were assessed among the affected population in the Internally Displaced Camps (IDPs) in Bokokos Local Government Area. A Kobo Collect data survey tool was used to elicit data from the respondents through a set of closed-ended questionnaires. Additionally, a convenience sampling technique was adopted due to the security and psychological condition of the target population to which questionnaires were administered.

Before approaching the IDP camps, gatekeepers were identified, which included five (5) religious leaders, three (3) community heads, two (2) IDP camp management team members, and two (2) Police officers from Operation Safe Haven. The consent of the above-listed authorities paved the way for easy access to the victims of the attacks in the camps. Before then, a meeting was held, and a short interview and questioning were conducted to ascertain the purpose of our research/study. Through the process, assurance was granted that all information provided would solely be used for academic purposes, and information obtained from groups or individuals would be kept in confidence.

As part of the ethical tradition in empirical research, a partnership with the Plateau State Directorate for Research and Documentation, Plateau State Peace Building Agencies (PPBA), and other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), such as Mercy Corps (MC) and Search for Common Ground (SFCG), was established to raise research assistants. These assistants, who are

indigenous people of the affected communities, were identified and duly oriented on how the questionnaires should be administered to reflect the true feelings and perceptions of the target population. Thus, Hausa and the native language of the locals were used as a medium of communication for interpreting the content of the questionnaires.

Method of Data Analysis

Simple percentages, Linear Regression, and One-Way ANOVA were used to critically analyse the data generated from the field. These statistical packages added significant value to understanding the trends, patterns, dynamics, and impact of the violent attacks on the rural communities of Bokkos L.G.A.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Socio-Demographic data

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	69	86.3%
Male	11	13.8%
Total	80	100.0%
Age		
19-28	13	16.3%
29-38	22	27.5%
39-48	23	28.8%
49 and above	22	27.5%
Total	80	100.0%
Marital Status		
Married	67	83.8%
Single	4	5.0%
Divorce	0	0.0%
Widow	9	11.3%
Total	80	100.0%
Occupation		
Business	7	8.8%
Civil		
Servant	2	2.5%
Farmer	71	88.8%
Total	80	100.0%

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic data of the respondents in the study area. The overwhelming majority of respondents are females, constituting 86.3% of the sample, while males make up only 13.8%. This skewed gender distribution aligns with the situation commonly observed in IDP camps, where women and children often outnumber men. In many conflict-affected areas, males frequently take on the role of sourcing food and other essentials, resulting in

fewer male residents in the camps. Therefore, the high percentage of females in the sample underscores the need to prioritise women's perspectives and needs in post-conflict interventions, as they often bear the brunt of the conflict's impact.

Regarding age distribution, the data shows representation from various age groups. Notably, 16.3% of respondents fall within the 19-28 age bracket, 27.5% each are in the 29-38 and 49 and above age groups, and 28.8% are in the 39-48 age group. This diversity across age ranges suggests that conflicts affect individuals across different life stages, from young adults to the elderly, in Bokokos.

In terms of marital status, the majority of respondents are married (83.8%), followed by widows (11.3%), with a small percentage being single (5.0%). The high percentage of married respondents reflects the magnitude of women's vulnerability during such attacks. Married women, as primary caregivers in many households, face distinct challenges and responsibilities in IDP camps, including ensuring the well-being of their children and managing household affairs in challenging conditions. The presence of widows highlights the specific vulnerabilities faced by this group, often grappling with loss, economic hardships, and caregiving responsibilities on their own.

Occupationally, a vast majority of respondents identify as farmers (88.8%), while a smaller percentage are engaged in business (8.8%) or civil service (2.5%). The predominance of farmers underscores the central role of agriculture in the local economy and the significant impact of conflicts on livelihoods. In IDP camps, the absence of farming opportunities can exacerbate food insecurity and economic hardships for farmers, highlighting the need for interventions that address these challenges and support alternative livelihood options for displaced individuals.

Objective 1. To evaluate the Pattern of the Christmas Eve attacks on communities within Bokokos Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Table 2: Pattern of Conflict by Communities

Communities	Pattern of Conflicts				Total
	All of the Above	Contest for survival (land space)	Ethical differences	Religious differences	
Batura	0 0.0%	1 25.0%	0 0.0%	3 75.0%	4 100.0%
Bokokos	0 0.0%	8 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	8 100.0%
Daffo	0 0.0%	5 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	5 100.0%
Damwai	0 0.0%	4 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	4 100.0%
Kwatas	0 0.0%	6 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	6 100.0%
Mangor	0 0.0%	7 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	7 100.0%
Manguna	0 0.0%	6 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	6 100.0%

Mbar	0 0.0%	1 11.1%	0 0.0%	8 88.9%	9 100.0%
Mushere Central	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	5 100.0%	5 100.0%
Mushere West	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	6 100.0%	6 100.0%
Richa	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	3 75.0%	1 25.0%	4 100.0%
Sha	4 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	4 100.0%
Tangur	8 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	8 100.0%
Toff	4 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	4 100.0%
Total	16 20.0%	38 47.5%	3 3.8%	23 28.7%	80 100.0%

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 2 presents a detailed breakdown of conflict patterns across communities within Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State, categorised into four main types: "All of the Above," "Contest for survival (land space)," "Ethical differences," and "Religious differences." "Contest for survival (land space)" emerges as the predominant cause of conflict, accounting for 47.5% of all observed conflicts, followed by "Religious differences" at 28.7%. "All of the Above" and "Ethical differences" contribute to 20% and 3.8% of conflicts, respectively. Notably, communities like Bokkos, Daffo, Damwai, Kwatas, Mangor, and Manguna experience conflicts solely related to land disputes, while others, such as Mbar and Richa, face conflicts primarily due to religious tensions. This diversity in conflict dynamics underscores the importance of addressing underlying factors to mitigate conflict effectively across the region.

Table 3: Various Aspects Related to The Conflict

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>No. of Occurrences</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Attack Severity	Very Severe	46	57.5%
	Minimal	4	5.0%
	Severe	30	37.5%
	Total	80	100.0%
Attack Motivations	Religious differences	23	28.8%
	Ethnic differences	3	3.8%
	Contest for survival (land space)	38	47.5%
	All of the Above	16	20.0%
	Total	80	100.0%
Targets of Attack	Loved ones (immediate family)	9	11.3%
	Livestock	15	18.8%
	Household items	15	18.8%
	House(s)	8	10.0%
	Food items	5	6.3%
	All of the above	28	35.0%
	Total	80	100.0%



Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 3 provides a detailed analysis of various aspects related to the Christmas Eve attacks in Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State.

The severity of attacks in Bokkos Local Government Area is classified into three levels: "Very Severe," "Minimal," and "Severe." A significant majority of attacks, accounting for 57.5% of occurrences, are categorised as "Very Severe." This is followed by "Severe" attacks at 37.5%, while "Minimal" attacks represent only 5% of the incidents.

The motivations behind the attacks exhibit a diverse range of factors. The predominant motivation, accounting for 47.5% of occurrences, is "Contest for survival (land space)." This is closely followed by "Religious differences" at 28.8%. "All of the Above" and "Ethnic differences" motivations represent 20.0% and 3.8% of the attacks, respectively. This suggests a complex interplay of religious, ethnic, and territorial factors contributing to the conflict dynamics in the region.

The targets of the attacks also vary significantly, encompassing both personal and material possessions. "Livestock" and "Household items" are the most frequently targeted, each comprising 18.8% of occurrences. "House(s)" are targeted in 10.0% of attacks. Additionally, "Loved ones (immediate family)" and "Food items" represent 11.3% and 6.3% of attack targets, respectively. Interestingly, 35.0% of attacks aimed at "All of the above," indicating a wide-ranging impact on both personal and community assets during the attacks. This diversity in targets underscores the comprehensive nature of the attacks, affecting various aspects of community life in Bokkos.

Objective 2. To investigate the underlying factors and drivers contributing to the Christmas Eve attacks on communities in Bokkos Local Government Areas.

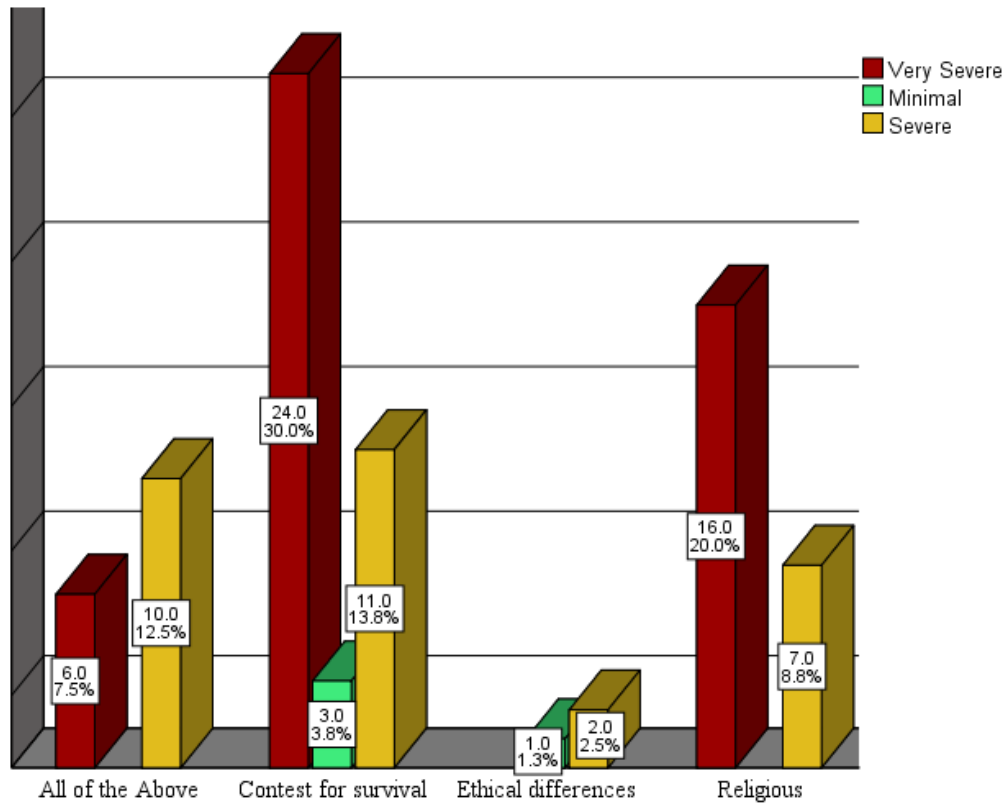


Table 4: Cross Tabulation between Contributing Drivers and Attack Severity

Contributing Drivers	Severity			Total
	Very Severe	Minimal	Severe	
Religious differences	16 20.0%	0 0.0%	7 8.8%	23 28.7%
Ethical differences	0 0.0%	1 1.3%	2 2.5%	3 3.8%
Contest for survival (land space)	24 30.0%	3 3.8%	11 13.8%	38 47.5%
All of the Above	6 7.5%	0 0.0%	10 12.5%	16 20.0%
Total	46 57.5%	4 5.0%	30 37.5%	80 100.0%

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 4 provides a cross-tabulation between the contributing drivers and the severity of attacks in Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State. Religious Differences are a notable driver, with the majority of attacks categorised as "Very Severe," accounting for 20.0% of all attacks.

Interestingly, there are no "Minimal" severity attacks attributed to religious differences, and those classified as "Severe" make up 8.8%.

On the other hand, Ethical Differences as a driver see fewer occurrences of attacks, with one being "Minimal" (1.3%), two "Severe" (2.5%), and none categorised as "Very Severe." The Contest for Survival (Land Space) emerges as a prominent contributing driver with the highest number of attacks at 38. A significant 30.0% of these attacks are "Very Severe," and there are also three "Minimal" severity attacks (3.8%) and 11 "Severe" attacks (13.8%).

Furthermore, the "All of the above" category combines multiple motivating factors, and for this, six attacks are "Very Severe" (7.5%) and 10 are "Severe" (12.5%), with none falling under "Minimal" severity. Overall, the majority of attacks across all contributing drivers are "Very Severe," constituting 57.5% of all attacks. "Severe" attacks make up 37.5%, while "Minimal" attacks are the least common, representing only 5.0%. Among the contributing drivers, "Contest for survival (land space)" stands out as the predominant motivator, followed by "Religious differences" and "All of the above." This analysis underscores the critical role of various contributing drivers, especially land disputes, in influencing the severity of attacks in the region and highlights the need for targeted interventions to address these underlying factors.

Table 5: Chi-square test showing the association between contributing drivers and the targets of the attacks in the study area.

<i>Opinions</i>	<i>Observed frequency</i>	<i>Expected Frequency</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Level of sig</i>	<i>X^{2-cal}</i>	<i>P-Value</i>	<i>Decision</i>
Targets of Attacks	80	80	15	0.05	107.832 ^a	.000	Significant
Contributing Drivers	80	80					

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 5 presents the results of a Chi-square test examining the association between contributing drivers and the targets of attacks in Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State. With 80 observed frequencies for both targets and contributing drivers, a degree of freedom of 15, and a significance level set at 0.05, the calculated Chi-square value is 107.832, yielding a P-Value of .000. This P-Value, being less than the significance level, indicates a statistically significant association between the two variables, confirming that contributing drivers influence the selection of targets during attacks in the area.

3. To analyse the broader implications and repercussions of the Christmas Eve attacks in Bokkos Local Government Area.

Table 6: Linear Regression predicting the severity of attacks based on community and attack motivation

<i>Model Summary</i>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.792 ^a	.628	.618	2.41615

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attack Motivation of the Conflict, Human Cause

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	758.040	2	379.020	64.925	.000 ^b
	Residual	449.510	77	5.838		
	Total	1207.550	79			

a. Dependent Variable: Community

b. Predictors: (Constant), Cause of the Conflict, Human Cause

Coefficients^a

Model		B	Std. Error	Standardised Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.725	1.300		2.097	0.039
	Human Cause	-0.319	0.458	-0.049	-0.697	0.488
	Cause of the Conflict	2.483	0.220	0.787	11.292	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Community

Source: Field survey, 2025

The linear regression analysis conducted aimed to analyse the severity of attacks in Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State based on community and attack motivation. The Model Summary indicates a reasonably good fit, with an R-value of .792 and an R Square of .628. This suggests that approximately 62.8% of the variability in attack severity can be explained by the predictors in the model. The Adjusted R Square stands at .618, considering the number of predictors, and the standard error of the estimate is 2.41615.

Moving on to the ANOVA results, the regression model shows significant explanatory power. The regression sum of squares is 758.040 with a mean square of 379.020. The F-value is highly significant at 64.925, with a corresponding p-value of .000, confirming that the model is a good fit for the data.

In the Coefficients table, the intercept or Constant is 2.725 with a significance level of 0.039. The predictor 'Human Cause' has a coefficient of -0.319 but is not statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.488, suggesting it doesn't significantly influence attack severity when other predictors are considered. Conversely, 'Cause of the Conflict' shows a strong positive relationship with attack severity, indicated by a coefficient of 2.483 and a highly significant p-value of 0.000.

In summary, the regression model highlights that the 'Cause of the Conflict' is a significant predictor of attack severity in the communities studied. In contrast, 'Human Cause' doesn't play a significant role. This underscores the importance of addressing the root causes of conflicts to better understand and potentially mitigate attack severity in Bokkos Local Government Area.

Table 7: A One-Way ANOVA Analysis of Variations Across Communities and Loss Incurred

Lost Incurred

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	141.349	13	10.873	10.689	.000
Within Groups	67.139	66	1.017		
Total	208.487	79			

Source: Field survey, 2025

The One-Way ANOVA analysis examines variations across communities concerning the loss incurred in Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State. The analysis reveals significant differences, as indicated by the results: Between Groups, the sum of squares is 141.349, with 13 degrees of freedom and a mean square of 10.873. The calculated F-value is 10.689, and the corresponding p-value is .000, denoting high statistical significance. Conversely, Within Groups, the sum of squares is 67.139 with 66 degrees of freedom and a mean square of 1.017. The total sum of squares is 208.487, encompassing 79 observations. These findings suggest that there are substantial variations in loss incurred across different communities within Bokkos Local Government Area, underscoring the importance of understanding and addressing the factors contributing to these disparities.

Key Findings

The study revealed that the trend, pattern, and dynamics of the Christmas Eve attacks fall within the context of a struggle for survival, mainly between the host community, which is agrarian, and the nomadic herders. This can further be broadened within the context of the implications of global warming and climate change effects, which keep decreasing the quantity and quality of resources essential for the survival and prosperity of the conflicting parties in Bokkos local council communities. This implies how the two parties are struggling for survival in the face of the urgent threat of the changing climate and its vulnerability to erratic rainfall patterns, dried rivers, increased heat waves, desert encroachment, and drought, among others.

Environmental degradation occasioned by climate change is the motivating factor of the protracted violent conflict in rural parts of Plateau State, and Bokkos, to be specific. This underscores the response of the study population that "survival of the fittest" is the order of the day.

The severity of the attack is substantially established, with huge loss of lives and property (mainly livestock and houses). This suggests that the violent attacks have a catastrophic effect on the economy and livelihoods of the communities in Bokkos. It also implies that the attack will affect the living standard and condition of the rural population in terms of access to food and water, and further worsen the infrastructural decay associated with typical rural communities in Nigeria.

As a supplementary finding, the study discovered a high level of women's vulnerability in the Christmas Eve attacks in Bokkos communities. This was evident in the demographic analysis of the respondents. The study further inferred that children are, by implication, also greatly affected, with untold consequences on malnutrition and childhood-associated diseases and other forms of



vulnerabilities. This can be substantiated by previous studies, where women and children mostly bear the brunt of violent conflicts. To buttress the above findings, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (2024), cited in a UNICEF Report (2024), documented that 215 people were injured and 15,313 individuals displaced to at least 7 IDP camps and numerous host communities in Bokkos LGA. Moreover, out of 865 people killed, 160 of whom were children.

Conclusion

The fundamental premise of the paper lies in the silent agent of conflict on the Plateau: climate change. It is the result of the inevitable southwards migration of pastoralists fleeing the scorching effect of droughts, heat waves, and rapid desertification, and on the other hand, high demand for agricultural land by agrarian communities, who are more often compelled to trespass pastoral corridors. Equally, the grabbing of vast virgin spaces for urbanisation by the government and for farming purposes by urban elites. It is the combined forces of the aforementioned developments that culminated in what can be translated as violent conflict on the Plateau and its local communities.

Additionally, what actually manifested in the Christmas Eve attacks in Bokkos Local Government Area is a reflection of a struggle for survival, which was disguised as terrorism, ethno-religious attack, or what can be said to be rural banditry. Thus, it is the position of this study that what many studies viewed as religious extremism or ethnic cleansing in the Middle Belt and Plateau rural communities, to be specific, this paper sees as consequences of climate change worsened by the erosion of security institutions responsible for protecting lives and property.

Policy Suggestions

1. In an attempt to address environmentally induced conflicts, governments at all levels, in collaboration with relevant development partners, should invest more in climate-resilient infrastructure towards creating a conducive ecological platform for all land users.
2. To address rapid desert encroachment, the government and indeed all branches of government should have a clear policy on forestation and deforestation. Our climate action plans should be deliberately crafted to restore lost forests and develop initiatives to plant drought-tolerant trees to retain moisture and reduce the emission of Greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, which causes huge damage to the climate.
3. Smart agricultural policies should be invoked to embark on modern pastoralism, such as grazing reserves and ranches, as against open-field grazing, which serves as a recipe for clashes with farmers. Such a policy should provide a conducive atmosphere for breeding animals with state-of-the-art facilities for cross-breeding, veterinary clinics, standard water systems, markets, and hospitals, among others.
4. Rural security networking should be strengthened by co-opting the local communities into the security affairs that concern them. This synergy will achieve greater results by addressing the limitations of government security units in responding to early warning signals or distress calls due to poor logistics, difficult terrains, language barriers, communication networks, etc.



5. Security departments should be equipped with how to detect and treat early warning signals through the development and mobilisation of grassroots intelligence. Thus, preventive security measures need to be adopted and strengthened to reduce the intensity of terror attacks on innocent people, especially in rural communities.
6. The government should be deliberate in deepening religious tolerance among the contending religious groups in the state. This is born out of the fact that religious disharmony, rooted in the quest/competition for dominance, and ethical and religious differences rooted in the indigene/settler dichotomy, have been discovered to be one of the leading forces in instigating terror attacks and reprisal attacks in the urban and rural communities of Plateau State.



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FUDMA International Journal of Social Sciences (FUDIJOSS)

Vol. 5, No. 1 April, 2025

ISSN: 2735-9522 (Print) ISSN :2735-9530 (Online)



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