Empirical Analysis of the Nexus Between Cattle Rustling and Rural Violence in Taraba State

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Abstract

Even when there have been isolated cases of cattle rustling and armed banditry in Taraba state in the Fourth Republic; it did not constitute a serious security threat to the state. Despite this, it remained a source of public safety concern and an additional threat to the security of Taraba state. Apart from the loss of herds of cattle and other animals like sheep, goats and donkeys, it has also led to loss of lives, destruction of houses and property, and in some cases displacement of the affected victims. The implication of this is that it serves as a threat to the state of security in the state; as well as the overall national security architecture. It also deprives the affected herders of means of economic subsistence since that is the only source of their livelihood. It is based on this that the study is embarked upon to examine the nexus between cattle rustling and rural violence in Taraba state. The study revealed that criminal gang activities have been responsible for this since most of the cattle rustlers are Fulani herders that steal cattle from among themselves and even from non-Fulani herders to increase their flock; or to sell and increase their prosperity. The study is a mixed method where both secondary and primary sources are used for generating data. The secondary data was sourced and analyzed through content analysis and discourse method and the result was *presented in explanatory form. Primary data was presented in tabular and graphical form using sequential systematic analysis, where the result was analyzed in descriptive and explanatory form. The study recommends that appropriate law should be enacted for the effective registering, marking and tracking of cattle in any given area (colony). All these will make it easy to track, trace and recover stolen cows and the subsequent arrest of the rustlers.*

Keywords: **Cattle Rustling, Armed Banditry, Rural Violence, Empirical, Conflicts.**

INTRODUCTION

Cattle rustling has been a subsisting security problem in the North Eastern region of Nigeria since pre-historic times more particularly in Taraba state. From the country's First Republic up to the Second Republic, cattle rustling was a rare occurrence where it majorly took place among the Fulani herders themselves either as a test of wit or as a purely criminal activity undertaken by harden criminals amongst them using rudimentary arms such as sticks, machetes and swords. The technology-driven postmodern era offers cattle rustlers alternate instruments of operation such as sophisticated AK 47, IEDs and other modern weapons (Bello & Abdullahi, 2021).

Because Nigeria's North East region covers a large expanse of land borders which is massively porous, it serves as a motivation for cattle rustlers who steal cows and crossover to neighbouring countries; that makes it impossible for Nigerian law enforcement agencies to track, trace and recover them. The rise of the Boko Haram insurgency and the proliferation of arms among the terrorists and the Fulani herders; made it easy for cattle rustlers in the region to terrorize their victims and dispossess them of their herds. The case of Taraba state is made worse because it is one of the states in the North East region that shares the longest, largest and topographically (forested/mountainous) difficult land boundary with the Republic of Cameroon. The rustled cows (cattle) from Taraba state are known to be ferried through the Republic of Cameroon as far as to Central African Republic and by extension to the Great Lake Region, which makes tracing impossible. The high returns from the sales of rustled cows made the illicit business lucrative to the thieves. The continuous conscription of teeming idle youths into cattle rustling in Taraba state has exacerbated the problem of rural violence and expanded the frontiers of insecurity in the state. The government of Taraba state has over the years, expended so much resource (finance, logistics/materials and human) in dually fighting cattle rustling and other conflicts in the state over the years; yet the problems seem not to abate. Despite the efforts of the Federal government and the Taraba state government in particular to stem the tide of cattle rustling with the associated violence; the problem is on the increase in the state. It is this governmental failure to tackle the problem of cattle rustling in Taraba state, which informs the motivation for this study (Onwuzuruigho, 2020).

There is no doubt that there have been isolated cases of cattle rustling and armed banditry in Taraba state in the Fourth Republic, but it did not constitute a serious security threat to the state from the beginning. However, as the journey into the Fourth Republic deepened, incidences of cattle rustling with the accompanying rural violence started increasing, such that it became a security concern for the government. It has led to the loss of herds of cattle and other animals like sheep and goats. It has also led to the loss of human lives, the destruction of houses and property, and in some cases displacement of the affected victims. This has adversely affected the security and socio-economic development of the state. Even though scholars have researched the problems of cattle rustling and rural violence in Taraba state and the North East, the elimination of cattle rustling and rural violence in Taraba state has remained problematic. These scholars failed to highlight the strategic position and the supposed leading role of traditional rulers and their subjects to serve as points for the microscopic identification of criminal elements engaged in this nefarious activity (Abdullahi & Madappali, 2017).

Furthermore, even though successive governments in the state have expended much resources and energy towards stemming the tide of this ugly security threat, it has yielded little results, where the incidences of cattle rustling and rural violence have been on the increase in the state. It is based on this failure that the study is embarked upon to examine the effect of cattle rustling and rural violence on the security and socio-economic development of the Taraba state.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
✓ **Realist Theory**

The realist theory emerged as the result of the perceived failures of the Idealist's solvents against war; but specifically of not preventing the outbreak of World War II in 1939. The Realists believed that there were laws of political behaviours by nations, and one of such laws is that states are always seeking to increase their power or to maximize it. If this is true, then nation-states must perpetually conflict. They then concluded that conflict is unavoidable in international relations, and that conflict and the struggle for power; characterized international relations. The second law introduced by them was that the dominant states are always pursuing their selfish national interest. The third law is that although helpful lessons can be learnt from war, it cannot be completely removed from international relations. Hans Morgenthau was the chief advocate of the Realist school. He argued that the pursuit of power explains the way states behave and that it "*might take right*"; such that states are not concerned about morality, because that is defined by them in line with their national interests (Morgenthau, 1978).

Contextually, the Realist theory can be applied to this study at a microscopic level because the cattle rustlers (armed bandits) are relying on their might to take what they feel is their right since the state cannot provide for all their wants. As such, they defy all moral norms and even official laws to perpetrate their evils on their victims with the accompanying violence to serve their selfish interests (Chesnais, 1992).

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The duo of Abdullahi & Madappali (2017) in their joint study have described cattle rustling as the act of stealing cows primarily for economic gains that leaves the victims (if alive) in pain and trauma. Their views imply that cattle rustling is a societal misnomer and a criminal activity undertaken by bad eggs and criminal elements in society. For Mohammed & Ibrahim (2015), they described cattle rustling as an act that resulted from the failure of leaders to curb the menaces of social and economic upheavals. This according to them creates unstable socio-economic and political conditions. This study seems not to agree wholly with their views because there is no empirical linkage between the performances of the leadership in curbing social and economic upheavals as the causes of cattle rustling. The position of this study about their views is that, even in very stable socio-political and economic conditions; cattle rustling does take place because, in every society, there are social deviants (Olarenwaju, 2013).

, Abdulazeez, Ibrahim & Ibrahim (2018), pointed out that banditry and cattle rustling have been major causes of farmers and herdsmen conflict. They went on to add that those conflicts further deepened the poverty level of both farmers and herdsmen. They also upheld that those conflicts inhibit the abilities of both farmers and herdsmen in other endeavours. Their views tilted more toward the effect of cattle rustling on the

victims, which this study seems to agree with. Bello & Abdullahi (2021), stated that the socio-economic activities of both the farmers and herdsmen have been curtailed as the result of the insecurity situation generated by both cattle rustling and banditry. They further stated that the continuous increase in banditry and cattle rustling is triggered by economic and commercial motives. Their views seem to align with the views of Bello & Abdullahi above, which this study seems to allude to.

For Onwuzuruigho (2020), the ungoverned forest spaces of Northern Nigeria are increasingly serving as enclaves for armed Bandits and cattle rustlers, where they carry out their training and mapping out strategies for unleashing mayhem on their victims. This study concurs with the summation of Onwuzuruigbo on the lack of effective governmental control of these parks (game reserves), where these forests have been easily converted into dens of thieves and other violent criminal elements (including bandits and rustlers). The trio of Abdullahi, Victor and Binta (2017), lamented the growing menace of banditry and cattle rustling in Katsina state, which created turbulence and very unstable socio-political conditions, especially in the rural spaces.

According to Uzoma (2020), cattle rustling hurts the welfare of cattle producers in Yobe State. Though his study is confined to Yobe state, his observations are replicas of what is happening in the whole North Eastern states of Nigeria. Just like Uzoma, the work of Aderinoye-Abdulwahab, Fasanya, Kareem & Dolapo (2019) is limited to cattle rustling in Niger state. They uphold that cattle rustling, has been serving as a pullback on the progress of socio-economic development and stable livelihoods of pastoralists in Niger state. The study would like to add to their views that it has dilapidating effects on the livelihoods of the hitherto economically disadvantaged Northern Nigerians. In the same vein, Atman (2019) in his study of cattle rustling in pastoral communities of Kwame Local Government Area of Gombe state seems to toe the same line with Aderinoye-Abdulwahab et al above. Atman also dwells on the description of the nature of cattle rustling but ends with its negative effects among the pastoralists. While agreeing with his views, this study would like to add that, the livelihoods of non-pastoralists like farmers and other vocations are also affected, more especially when cattle rustling and banditry have degenerated into rural violence.

While, Ibrahim, Ibrahim, Allah & Saulawa (2016) in their study; went about proffering ways on how to curtail cattle rustling in Katsina state. They specifically advocated for the building of a community cattle ranch and radio frequency identification (RFID) technology as an alternative method of curtailing cattle rustling in the state. Though a new high-tech strategy advocated by Ibrahim et al, this study agrees with them that it should be put into practice as a trial in that state (Katsina); where other states of the North (Taraba inclusive) can adopt it if it proves effective.

DISCUSSION OF RESULT OF QUALITATIVE DATA ON CATTLE RUSTLING AND RURAL VIOLENCE IN TARABA STATE
Qualitative data generated through secondary sources are hereby presented and analyzed through descriptive methods and drawing inferences where necessary. Data with figures; are presented in tabular and graphical forms and analyzed through the explanatory method.

✓ **Factors Responsible for Cattle Rustling in Taraba State**

The resurgence of cattle rustling and violence in Taraba state of Nigeria has been attributable to post-cold war/globalization developments such as the proliferation of criminal armed gangs, armed banditry, Fulani herders-farmers conflicts and the rising cases of kidnappings and abductions for ransom. All these have exacerbated the problem of cattle rustling as one of the causes of national security disequilibrium in recent times (Daily Trust, 2014; Ekekwe, 2015).

A traditional cause of cattle rustling among Fulani herders in Nigeria and Taraba is that it was regarded as a show of wit among some of them. Those who are engaged in it, regard it as a show of bravery when they can steal cows and make away with it without being caught. Even though it is a negative aspect of the Fulani culture undertaken by criminal elements among them; cattle rustling remains a vexed security problem and a most volatile source of rural violence in Taraba state. The criminal elements among the Fulani herders engaged in cattle rustling often employ diabolical means to ensure smooth and successful operations (Ibrahim, Ibrahim, Allah & Saulawa (2016).

Another cause of cattle rustling in Taraba state is the rise of kidnappings and abductions for ransom, where the Nigerian security agencies uphold that some Fulani herdsmen are known to be involved in it or are collaborators with other criminal elements. This reveals the growing complexities of violent clashes between cattle breeders and sedentary agriculturalists across different parts of the state. The alleged involvement of the pastoralists from neighbouring countries in shipping arms and ammunition to Taraba state for the perpetuation of kidnappings and abductions for ransom informs the need to investigate the trans-national and multidimensional causes; as well as the politicization of the problem of cattle rustling with the associated violence. The formerly symbiotic relationship that once existed between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers; such as the economic exchange of dairy products for grains, access to local markets and the provision of manure on arable lands; while the cattle consume crop residues has been greatly distorted. In addition, the once harmonious religious and cultural relationships between Nigeria's indigenous Fulani herders have also been destroyed by the activities of foreign Fulani migrants from the Niger Republic and the wider Sahelian-Maghrebian regions of North Africa. Most of these migrating foreign pastoral Fulani herders were either direct or indirect armed mercenaries (militias) of the 2011 Libyan crises. The Liaises-fair attitude of the Nigerian government towards regulating the entry of these foreign Fulani herders to Northern Nigeria and Taraba state in particular has led to the upsurge in cattle rustling and other violent activities in the state (Aderinoye-Abdulwahab, Fasanya, Kareem & Dolapo, 2019).

Other factors responsible for cattle rustling such as climate change, trespass on traditional cattle routes, the growth of agro-pastoralism, and the expansion of farming on pastures as upheld by some scholars are not scientifically based; and cannot therefore be relied upon. Some factors such as invasion of farmlands by cattle, assault on non-Fulani women by herders, freshwater scarcity, and bush burning cannot be causes of cattle rustling as claimed by some scholars. Rather, they can be potential causes of conflicts or violence in Taraba state (Karim & Saleh, 2017).

✓ **Empirical Analysis of Qualitative Data on Cattle Rustling in Taraba State, 1999-2022**

The number of cattle and other animals rustled in Taraba State between 1999 and 2022 indicated that a total of 176,782 animals have been rustled within the period. Out of this total, the number of cattle rustled was put at 134,182 between 1999 and 2022, which represents 76% of the total rustled animals for the period; with an annual average of 5,834 cattle rustled. While the cumulative annual average of all animals rustled for the period stands at 7,686, and the source average stands at 44,196 animals. A total of 132,588 rustled animals were rescued representing 75% of the total number of animals rustled for the period leaving a balance of 44,194 (25%) rustled animals yet to be rescued (recovered). One hundred thousand six hundred and thirty-eight (100,638) out of the rescued animals were cattle representing 76% of all the total rescued animals for the period of the study. A total of one hundred (120) rustlers were arrested for the period of the study; one hundred (100) out of which were those arrested for cattle theft; representing 83%. Ten (10) rustlers were killed in connection with the theft of animals for the period of the study. Twenty (20) herders were killed in connection with cattle theft during the period (Daily Trust, 2014; Onwuzuruigbo, 2020). See Table 1 and Figures 1 to 5 below:
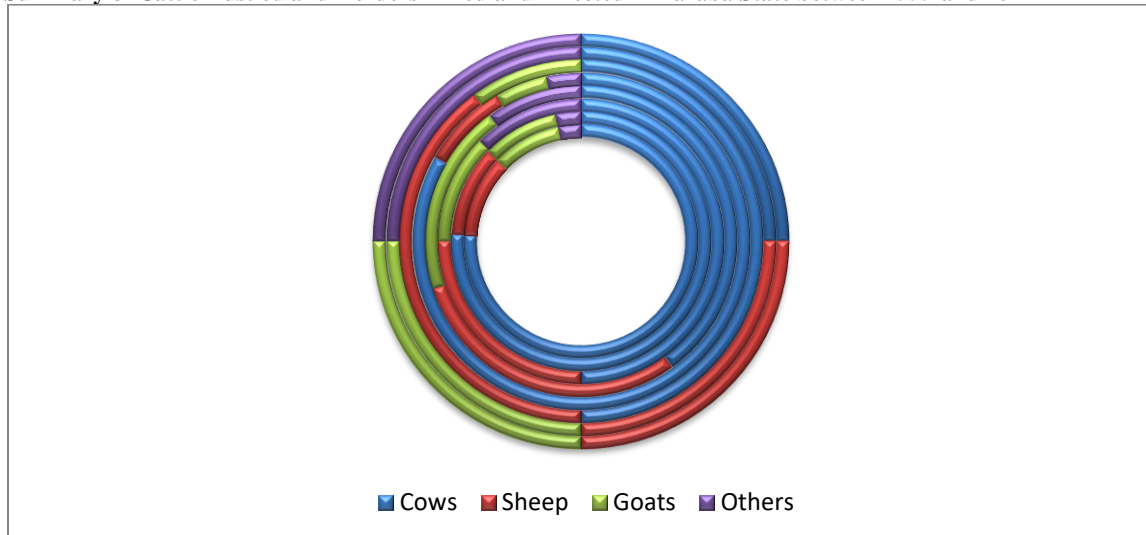
Table 1: Summary of Animals (Cattle) Rustled, Animals (Cattle) Recovered and Herders Killed and Affected in Taraba State between 1999 and 2022

	Cumulative	Cattle	Sheep	Goats	Others
Animals Rustled	176,782	134,182 (76%)	20,000(12%)	17,000(10%)	5.600(3%)
Animals Rescued	132,588	100,638	15,000	12,750	4,200
Herders Killed/Affected	40	20	10	5	5
Herders Displaced	6,200	5,600	600	200	200
Rustlers Arrested	120	100	10	6	4
Rustlers Killed	10	8	2	-	-
Annual Average	7,686	7,686	7,686	7,686	7,686
Source Average	44,196	44,196	44,196	44,196	44,196
Percentage	100%	76%	1%	0%	0%
Total	176,782	134,182	20,000	17,000	5,600

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2023 as adapted from Eleneke, 2010; Okello, 2014; Onwuzuruigbo, 2020

Fig. 1:
Summary of Cattle Rustled and Herders Killed and Affected in Taraba State between 1999 and 2022
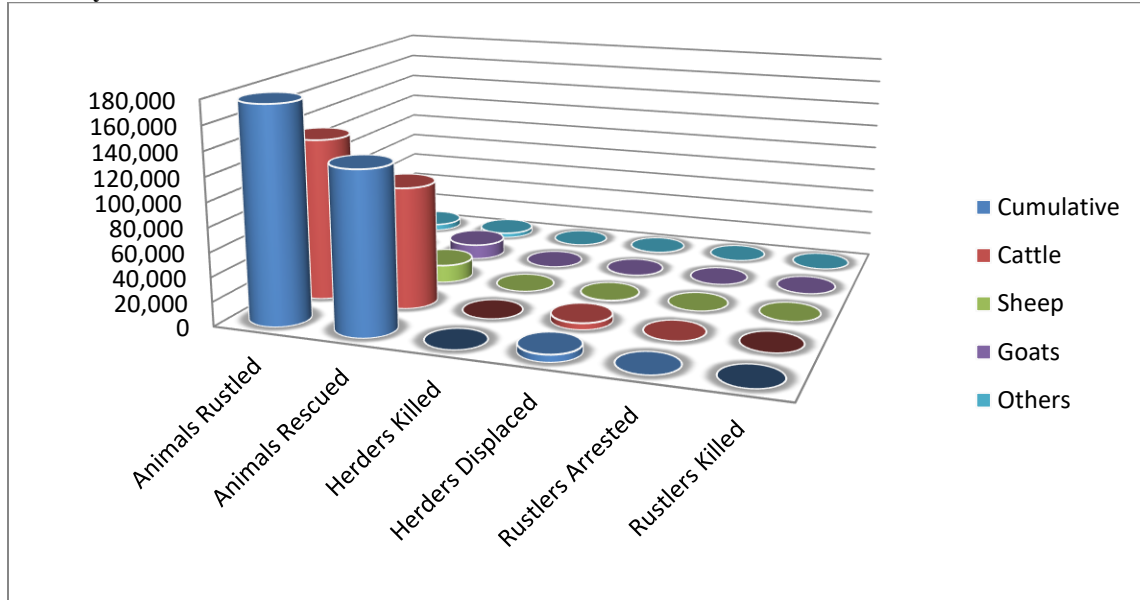

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2023 as adapted from Eleneke, 2010; Abbass, 2014; Okello, 2014

From Fig. 1 above, the average cattle rustled between 1999 and 2022 in Taraba state is 5,834 per annum. It indicates a very high incidence/rate of cattle rustling in the state for the period of the study. This has dwarfed the combined average of the remaining three animals (sheep, goats and others) which stands at 1,852 per annum. The high incidence of cattle theft in Tararba state is hinged on the fact that it has the highest net benefits from ready markets and ease of disposal based on high demands (Eleneke, 2010; Okello, 2014; Onwuzuruigbo, 2020).
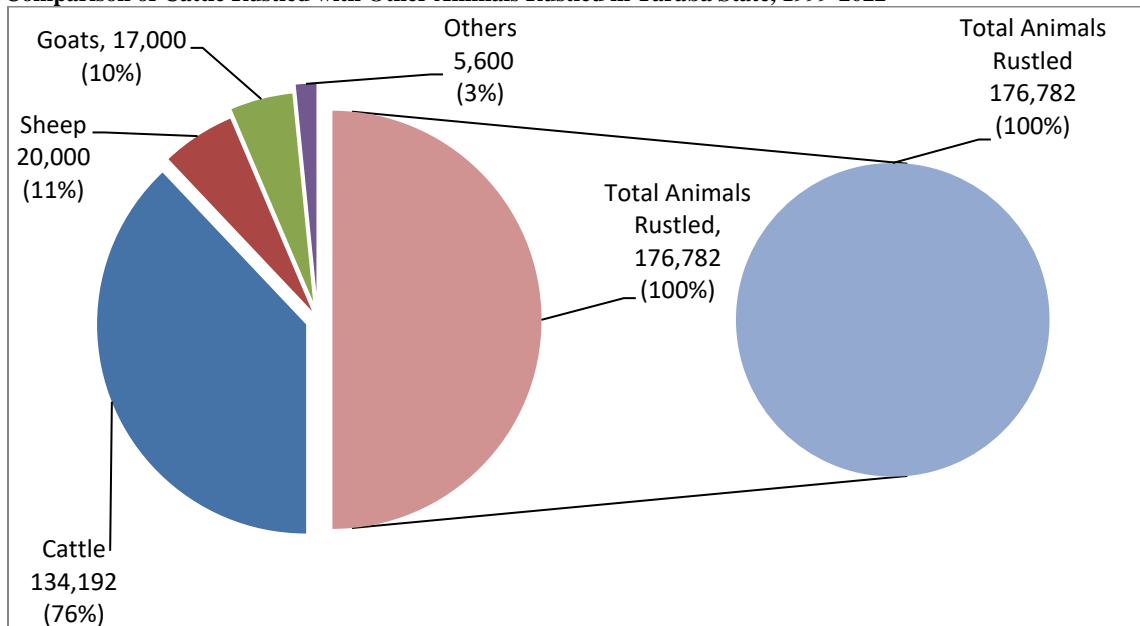
Fig. 2:
Summary of Animals Rustled and Herders Arrested and Affected in Taraba State between 1999 and 2022

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2023 as adapted from Eleneke, 2010; Abbass, 2014; Okello, 2014
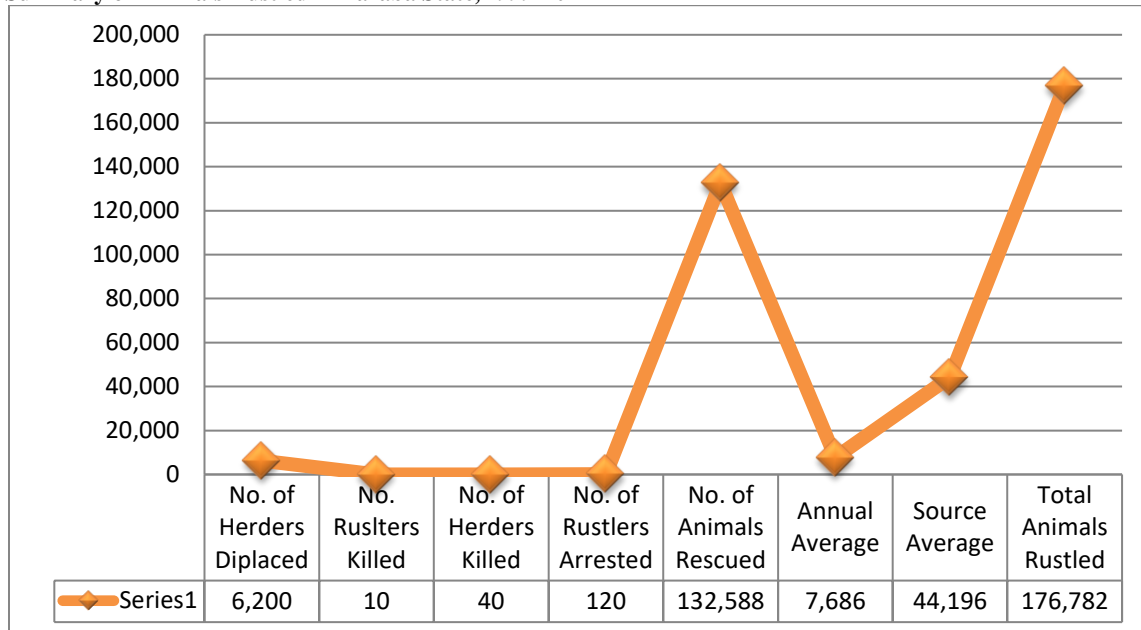
Fig. 3:
Comparison of Cattle Rustled with Other Animals Rustled in Taraba State, 1999-2022

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2023 as adapted from Eleneke, 2010; Onwuzuruigbo, 2020; Okello, 2014

Fig. 4:
Summary of Animals Rustled in Taraba State, 1999-2022

	No. of Herders Diplaced	No. Ruslters Killed	No. of Herders Killed	No. of Rustlers Arrested	No. of Animals Rescued	Annual Average	Source Average	Total Animals Rustled
Series1	6,200	10	40	120	132,588	7,686	44,196	176,782

Source: Generated by the Researchers in 2023as adapted from Eleneke, 2010; Abbass, 2014; Okello, 2014

✓ **Comparison of Recovery of Rustled Cattle in Taraba State with Four other States (Katsina, Kaduna, Adamawa and Gombe States)**

Even though cattle rustling is on the increase in Taraba state, the level of occurrence is low compared to Katsina and Kaduna, but it recovered higher than Gombe state. Results of the empirical study indicate that Taraba state is the fourth in terms of recovery of rustled cattle among the five states for the period of the study; where it recovered (rescued) one hundred thousand six hundred and thirty-eight (100,638) rustled cattle between 1999 and 2022. This represents 15% of the total recoveries made by the five states, which stands at 666,739 cattle. In this regard, Katsina state leads, where it recorded 202,000 cattle recoveries representing 30% of the total for the period of the study. This is followed by Kaduna state with 172,000 cattle recovered (rescued) representing 26% of the total recoveries made. Adamawa is third with 113,623 cattle (17%) and Gombe state is placed fifth with 78,478 cattle (12%) recovered (rescued) for the same period. The annual average rate of recovery for each state still put Katsina state as leading with 8,783. The rest are Kaduna state with 7,478, Taraba state with 4,376, Adamawa state with 4,940 and Gombe state with 3,012. Both the cumulative recovery and annual average show that the trend of cattle rustling is on the increase in Taraba state (Olarenwaju, 2013).
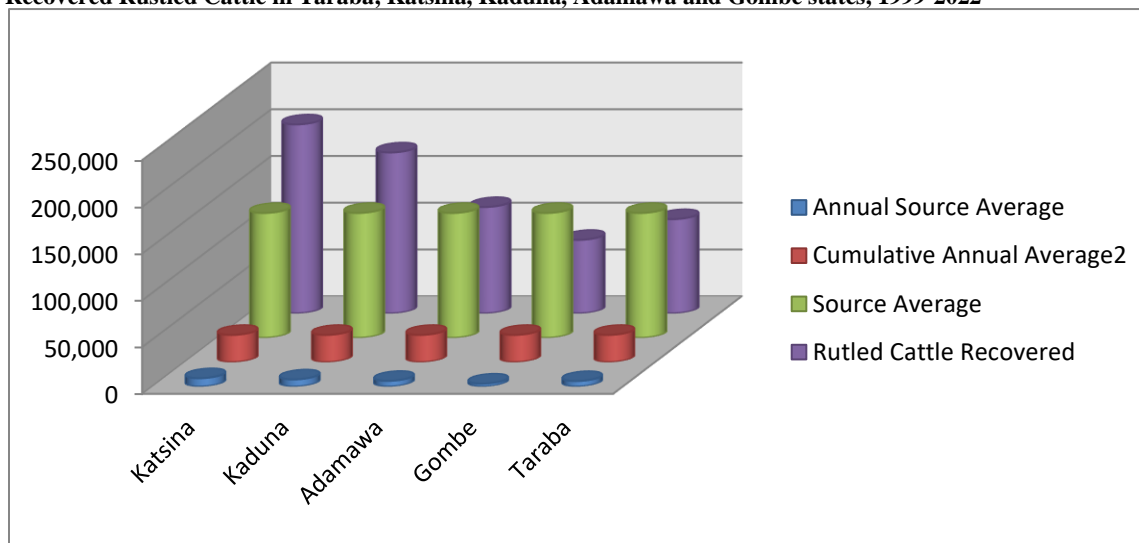
Further comparison indicates that the total rustled cattle recovered in Taraba state between 1999 and 2022, which stands at 100,638; represents 50% of the total rustled cattle recovered (rescued) in Katsina state for the period of the study. Even though the trend is on the increase in Taraba state, it clearly shows that Katsina state is the epicentre of cattle rustling in the country; as well as the melting-pot of armed banditry, conflicts and rural violence in Northern Nigeria (Daily Trust, 2014; Okoli & Opkaleke, 2014a).
This explanation is presented in Table 2 as well as in Figures 6 and 7 below:
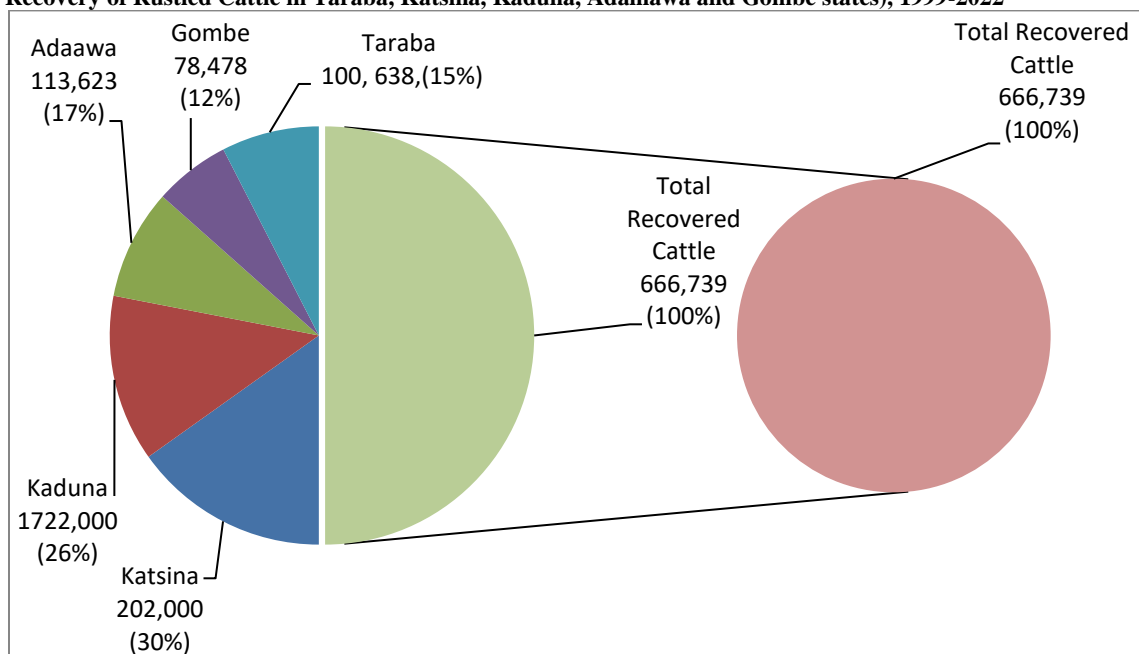
Table 2: Recovery of Rustled Cattle in Taraba state Compared with four other states (Katsina, Kaduna, Adamawa and Gombe states), 1999-2022

S/N	States	Rustled Cattle Recovered	SA	Differences	CAA	ASA	Percentage
1	Katsina	202,000	133,348	464,739	28,989	8,783	30%
2	Kaduna	172,000	133,348	494,739	28,989	7,478	26%
3	Adamawa	113,623	133,348	553,116	28,989	4,940	17%
4	Gomve	78,478	133,348	588,261	28,989	3,012	12%
5	Taraba	100,638	133,348	566,101	28,989	5,765	15%
	Total	**666,739**	**666,739**	**666,739**	**144,945**	**28,989**	**100%**

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2023 as adapted from Daily Trust, 2014; Okoli & Opkaleke, 2014a

Fig. 6:
Recovered Rustled Cattle in Taraba, Katsina, Kaduna, Adamawa and Gombe states, 1999-2022

Source: Generated by the Researchers in 2023 as adapted from Daily Trust, 2014; Okoli & Opkaleke, 2014a

Fig. 7:
Recovery of Rustled Cattle in Taraba, Katsina, Kaduna, Adamawa and Gombe states), 1999-2022

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2023 as adapted from Daily Trust, 2014; Okoli & Opkaleke, 2014a

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULT OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS ON CATTLE RUSTLING AND RURAL VIOLENCE IN TARABA STATE

Results of the oral interviews conducted separately in Karim Lamido, Gassol and Ardo Kola Local Government areas of Taraba state as presented in 1 and 2 below:

✓ **Frequency of Occurrence of Scores of Respondents on Curtailing Cattle Rustling and Rural Violence in Taraba State**
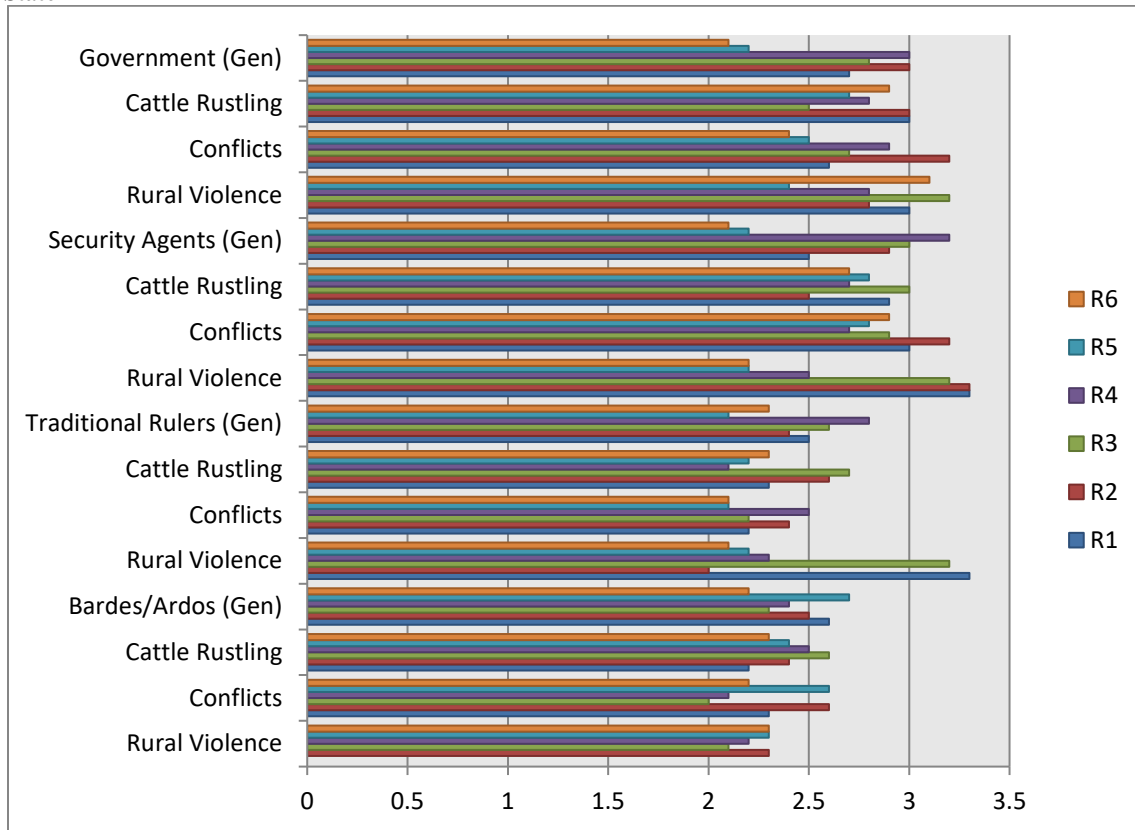
Summary of the result of the frequency of occurrence of the scores of the respondents are as presented in Table 3 and Fig 8 below:

Table 3: Frequency of Occurrence of Scores of Respondents on Curtailing Cattle Rustling and Rural Violence in Taraba State

Stakeholders/ Performances	Respondents/Scores							
	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	TSR	ASR
Government (Gen)	**2.7**	**3.0**	**2.8**	**3.0**	**2.2**	**2.1**	**15.8**	**2.6**
Cattle Rustling	3.0	3.2	2.5	2.8	2.7	2.9	17.1	2.9
Conflicts	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.9	2.5	2.4	16.9	2.8
Rural Violence	3.0	3.1	3.2	2.8	2.4	3.1	17.6	2.9
Security Agents (Gen)	**2.5**	**2.9**	**3.0**	**3.2**	**2.2**	**2.1**	**15.9**	**2.7**
Cattle Rustling	2.9	2.5	3.0	2.7	2.8	2.7	16.6	2.8
Conflicts	3.0	3.2	2.9	2.7	2.8	2.9	17.5	2.9
Rural Violence	3.3	3.0	3.2	2.5	2.2	2.2	16.4	2.7
Traditional Rulers (Gen)	**2.5**	**2.4**	**2.6**	**2.8**	**2.1**	**2.3**	**14/7**	**2.5**
Cattle Rustling	2.3	2.6	2.7	2.1	2.2	2.3	14.2	2.4
Conflicts	2.2	2.4	2.2	2.5	2.1	2.1	13.5	2.3
Rural Violence	2.1	2.0	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.1	13.0	2.2
Bardes / Ardos (Gen)	**2.6**	**2.5**	**2.3**	**2.4**	**2.7**	**2.2**	**14.7**	**2.5**
Cattle Rustling	2.2	2.4	2.6	2.5	2.4	2.3	14.4	2.4
Conflicts	2.3	2.6	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.2	13.4	2.2
Rural Violence	2.0	2.3	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.3	13.3	2.2

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2023 as adapted from Ordinal Rank of World Bank, 2021.

Fig. 8:
Frequency of Occurrence of Scores of Respondents on Curtailing Cattle Rustling and Rural Violence in Taraba State

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2023 as adapted from Ordinal Rank of World Bank, 2021.

Key: R – Respondent, R1-R6 – Respondent 1 up to Respondent 6, Gen. – General, TSR – Total Scores of Respondents, ASR – Average Scores of Respondents

Discussion of the Result of In-Depth Interviews

Even though the in-depth interviews and interface discussions were conducted separately with the respondents in their respective offices and residences in the three Local Government Areas of Taraba state, the results seem to indicate points of convergence and divergence on the issues raised. The performances of each of the critical stakeholders in the rural security sectors; regarding cattle rustling and rural violence in Taraba are hereby sequentially discussed:

Cattle Rustling:

From the statistics and graph above, the issue of cattle rustling has remained problematic in the security architecture of Taraba state for all the four critical stakeholders in the security sector where the individual average score of the four respondents for general performance was 6.3. Governmental efforts in terms of curbing cattle rustling and rural violence in Taraba state between 1999 and 2022; were rated 5.2 by the respondents on the Ordinal Scale. It was followed by the security agencies which was rated 6.4. The efforts of the traditional rulers in curbing cattle rustling, conflicts and violence in the state during the same period were rated 6.5. The performances of the Bardes/Ardos in tackling rural violence, conflicts and rural violence in the state were rated 3.0. Respondent 1 and Respondent 2 who represented the government shared almost the same views that the

government and security agencies have been up and doing in terms of intercepting and apprehending cattle rustlers in the state. The leaders of the farmers and that of the herdsmen on their part lamented the poor performances of all the statutory critical stakeholders in curbing cattle rustling, conflicts and rural violence in the state. Respondent *3* (Rinos Chiroma [Barde of farmers]) and Respondent *4* (Danladi Gidado, [Ardo of herders]), complained of a lack of proactive response by the government and security agencies on reported cases of impending threat by cattle rustlers. All four respondents also complained of a lack of effective mechanisms for registering, appropriately marking and tracking cattle and other animals brought into the state.

This study is in full agreement with the positions of Rinos Chiroma and Danladi Gidado in this regard. Their views also aligned with the lamentation of scholars such as; Bello (2013), and Okoli & Okpaleke. (2014b) where they stated that if the government and security agencies had been acting promptly on early warning signals, the cattle rustlers would have no breathing space in any state of Northern Nigeria. All the respondents seem to share the same views as to the absence of effective police patrol of the Gumti-Gashaka national game reserve and other forests in Taraba state, which allows for infiltration by foreign cattle rustlers from across Cameroon. This according to them made these forests safe havens for cattle rustlers, armed bandits and other criminal elements

Conflicts:

On the issue of conflicts triggered by cattle rustling in the state, there is a convergence of views of the four respondents, where they separately agreed that it is simmering down. Hence, their total average score for all four critical security stakeholders is set at 2.7 on the Ordinal Ranking scale. Governmental efforts in terms of curtailing conflicts arising from cattle rustling in Taraba state between 1999 and 2022; were rated 2.2 by the respondents on the Ordinal Scale. It was followed by the security agencies which was rated 2.3. The efforts of the traditional rulers in stemming conflicts arising from cattle rustling in the state for the same period were rated 2.4. The performances of the Bardes/Ardos in de-escalating conflicts at their early stage in the state were rated 2.5. Respondent *1* and Respondent *2* who were retired Permanent Secretaries and DIG of police shared almost the same views that the government and security agencies have been taking pro-active actions in resolving conflicts related to cattle rustlers at their embryonic stages in the state. The views of the traditional rulers, leaders of the farmers and that of the herdsmen seem to ally with the positions of R*1* & R*2;* (Mr. Christopher Adamu – Retired Permanent Secretary & Mr. Aminchi S. Baraya – Retired DIG of Police). However, they stated that a more quick-response strategy (QRS) needs to be adopted by government and security agencies on receiving reports of security threats from community leaders. They also applauded the efforts of all the critical stakeholders in curbing conflicts arising from cattle rustling in the state. Their views don't seem to ally with the views of the following scholars - Bello (2013), Okoli & Okpaleke (2014a) and Onwuzuruigbo, 2020; who believe that the delay in taking prompt action on reported conflicts arising from cattle rustling by the government and security agencies have been reoccurring decimals of conflicts in the state and the country.

Furthermore, there was convergence in the views of all the respondents, where they uphold that there was a failure on the part of the indigenous Fulani herders to educate the foreign migrating Fulani herders on the need to obey all Nigerian laws and to

live in peace with their co-farmers once they enter Taraba state. This according to them will re-establish the long-lost traditional harmony that existed between the pastoral Fulanis and the indigenous farmers who assist each other in identifying and arresting cattle rustlers amongst them.

Rural Violence:

About the issue of rural violence arising from cattle rustling in the state, there is divergence in the views of the respondents, where some said that there is a reduction in the number of incidences in Taraba state. Others stated that since cattle rustling as the main factor igniting rural violence in the state has not been stamped out; the issue still lives on. However, the total average score for all four critical security stakeholders is put at 3.7 on the Ordinal Ranking scale. Governmental efforts in terms of tackling rural violence arising from cattle rustling in Taraba state between 1999 and 2022; were rated 3.8 by the respondents on the Ordinal Scale. The performance of the security agencies in this regard was rated 3.9. The efforts of the traditional rulers in arresting rural violence arising from cattle rustling in the state for the same period were rated at 3.0. The performances of the Bardes/Ardos in de-escalating conflicts at their early stages in the state were rated 3.1. Respondent *5* and Respondent *6* who are traditional rulers shared almost the same views that the government and security agencies have been taking proactive actions in tackling rural violence related to cattle rustling at their early stages in the state. The views of leaders of the farmers and that of the herdsmen seem to ally with the positions of R*5* (Mal. Nuhu Mohammed Yawai – Tallah Bambur & R*6* (Justice Sani Suleiman Kachalla – Emir of Mutum-Biyu). However, they are of the view that a more quick-response strategy (QRS) needs to be adopted by government and security agencies on receiving reports of security threats from them (community leaders). They however stated that government and security agencies can do better if they promptly act on early warning signals (EWS) about impending violence related to cattle rustling in the state. Their views seem to align with the views of the following scholars such as – Okoli & Okpaleke (2014a) and Uzoma (2020); who believe that the neglect of early warning signals (EWS) from critical stakeholders allows for the escalation of rural violence. The views of these scholars point to the fact that the lack of prompt action on reported perceived or manifest rural violence arising from cattle rustling by government and security agencies made the problem subsist in the state.

IMPLICATION OF CATTLE RUSTLING ON SECURITY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF TARABA STATE

The implication of cattle rustling in Taraba state between 1999 and 2022 has been so dire on both the security and socio-economic development of the state. Apart from the loss of lives and property as well as the massive displacement of citizens from their homes, the proceeds from the sale of rustled cattle have been known to finance and fuel the perpetration and perpetuation of kidnappings and abductions for ransom in Taraba state. Furthermore, it has serious implications for the health, education and general infrastructure of the state. At a more microscopic level, cattle rustling in Taraba state has deprived genuine herders of their means of livelihood because most of them depend largely on the sales of the animals and their dairy products for basic subsistence and even for individual economic empowerment. It also has serious implications for subsistence farmers who have been scared of tilling their lands for fear of the heavily armed cattle

rustlers. This negatively affects agriculture and agricultural value chains leading to severe and acute food shortages (food insecurity). Another implication of cattle rustling is that of deprives the government of revenue from taxes on the sales of these cattle and other agro-allied food products. Other implications of cattle rustling in Taraba state include trauma by families that have experienced cases of rape, kidnapping and brutal killings of their loved ones. This has caused lingering psychological trauma in the affected people (victims). Some victims, in trying to overcome this trauma involve themselves in drug addiction, which further compounds their psychological problems. While others become resentful against the society, the state and the government (Aderinoye-Abdulwahab, Fasanya, Kareem & Dolapo, 2019; Bello & Abdullahi, 2021).

CONCLUSION
From the analysis so far, the conclusion can be drawn that cattle rustling has emerged as a major security challenge to the Taraba state government; where it is seen as a criminal enterprise with consequences on the socio-economic, political, cultural, and psychological spheres of society. At the economic level, it constitutes a major threat to the livelihood of the herders and those who depend on cows for survival. At the socio-political level, rustlers' activities have destroyed lives and property, thereby disturbing peace and creating security disequilibrium. Given the above, the Taraba state government over the years has expended time and enormous resources to eradicate cattle rustling with associated violence in the state. The huge chunk of money sunk by the Taraba state government in stemming the tide of cattle rustling in the state is based on its destructive effect on citizens, economy and the eco-system. The empirical analysis has established that one hundred and seventy-six thousand, seven hundred and eighty-two (176,782) animals (comprising cattle, sheep, goats and camel) out of which 132,588 rustled animals have been rescued for the period of the study. This represents just 75% of rustled animals in the state. It leaves a balance of 44,194 (25%) rustled animals yet to be rescued. The study has further established that 100,638 cattle out of the 134,192 rustled cattle have been rescued for the period of the study. This represents 75% of the cattle rescued in the state for the same period; which indicates a very high performance. Since rescuing rustled cattle in the state is becoming an uphill task, more efforts must, therefore, be expended in preventing cattle theft in the first place. The comparative analysis indicates that Taraba state is the fourth among the five states in terms of recovered (rescued) rustled cattle for the period of the study. It recovered (rescued) 100,638 cattle representing 15% of the total (666,739 cattle) against that of the group leader Katsina state, which recovered (rescued) 202,000 cattle representing 30% of the total of recovered (rescued) cattle of 666,739 cattle (100%) for the period of the study. The comparative advantage of being the third in terms of cattle rustling among the five states does not in the least; seem to suggest elements of complacency for the Taraba state government. Rather, the political leadership in the state should brace up for further action towards stamping out cattle rustling in the state.

By way of recommendations, the Taraba state government should urgently enact a law that will regulate the entry and movement of foreign Fulani herders with their cattle in the state. This will make it easy for the tracking of criminal elements among them. Indigenous Fulani herders should be encouraged to educate migrating foreign Fulani herders on the need to live in peace with their co-farmers once they enter Taraba state.

The Taraba state government with the collaboration of the Federal Government should deploy adequate security personnel to the Gumti-Gashaka national game reserve and other forests in the state to effectively patrol/police them since they serve as hideouts for cattle rustlers and other criminal elements. The government should solicit the support of the entire citizens of Taraba state to be involved in the task of ensuring the sustainable security of the state by supplying the security agencies with vital information that will lead to the arrest of those suspected of cattle rustling. The confidentiality and personal security (safety) of these informants must be kept and guaranteed. Even though the comparative empirical analysis has established that Taraba state is ranked fourth among the five Northern states in terms of recovery of rustled cattle, the Taraba state government should step up more efforts in flattening the curve of cattle rustling in the state.

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