



**COMMUNAL VIOLENCE AND THE
EXTREMITY OF POVERTY AMONG RURAL FARMERS
IN THE NORTH – CENTRAL REGION OF NIGERIA**

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Abstract:

The increasing spate of communal violence in North – Central region of Nigeria has taken a very high toll on lives and livelihoods and had displaced several people. These resultantly had exacerbated the level of vulnerability, food/economic insecurity, destitution, extreme deprivation and misery in the region especially among the rural farmers thereby exposing them to extreme poverty. This paper focuses therefore on examining the effects of communal violence on rural poverty, the extent to which communal violence has extremely impoverished the rural populace in the North – Central region of Nigeria and ways of minimising its spate. Data for the study was sourced from 405 respondents across the region using questionnaire method. Findings of the study identified the effects of communal violence to include: wanton destruction of human lives, property and other sources of livelihood, psychological trauma, food and health insecurity as well as displacement of small – holder rural farmers, making their living standards miserable and deplorable thereby increasing very extremely the rate of poverty in the area by 85 per cent. The paper therefore recommends immediate trial of perpetrators of violence, conflict management and peace studies and poverty alleviation as actionable solutions.

Keywords: communal, violence, poverty, rural, North - Central

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1. Introduction

One of the major plagues of sustainable rural development in Nigeria especially, the North – Central region has been the high spate of communal violence. The region has witnessed numerous episodes of violence across communal lines resulting into reckless destruction of both human and material resources that plunged most people, families or communities into extreme levels of poverty.

According to Horowitz (2000), communal violence is a form of violence that is perpetrated across ethnic or communal lines, the violent parties feel solidarity for their respective groups, and victims are chosen based upon group membership. Communitistic violence usually occurs between two or more communities over the quest for justice, contest for power or resource making the involved ethnic groups as perpetrators and victims (Mayowa, 2001; Dzuruga, 2006).

Extreme poverty on the other hand involves a very chronic or severe state of inadequacy of resources required to meet the basic human needs such as food/nutrition, shelter, clothing, acceptable levels of health and quality education etc; development policies; and access to power and other life improving opportunities of the people thereby making their living standard miserable and deplorable (Obadan, 2010; Akpehe, 2015).

The jeremiad of communal violence therefore lies in its precarious nature of undermining human well-being, social capital, institutions and sustainable development of the affected communities thereby resulting to extreme poverty and acute underdevelopment that endure even when the violence subsides.

It is sad and piteous to note that protracted violence among communities in the region had made many children orphans, some parents childless, increased the rate of widowhood and had rendered many people homeless, thereby foisting a 'refugee' status on them in their fatherland. At any point of its occurrence, children and women suffer most hardship ranging from hunger to many other forms of dehumanisation and trauma since they tend to be more vulnerable, with little or no defences.

The escalating violence among communities or states of the region have severely constrained development endeavours by destroying infrastructures, interrupting the production process and diverting resources away from productive uses (Adetula, 2004; Oji, Eme and Nwoabi, 2015). It had killed so many people – depleting the human manpower, affected the food security system, destroyed personal assets of immense worth, distorted agricultural production – the major source of livelihood in the area, and other socio – economic activities as well as the interpersonal relationships. The ugly monster had also caused proliferation of firearms within the region and soared the spread of a culture of violent extremism, militarism and criminality among the population.

The incidence of communal violence has taken a very high toll on lives and livelihoods and led to the displacement of several people, who have sought refuge in neighbouring urban areas (Human Right Watch, 2014) where they felt relatively safe. These resultantly had increased the level of vulnerability, food/economic insecurity,

destitution, extreme deprivation and misery on the rural people in the region thereby exposing them to extreme poverty.

Despite the foregoing, it is very regrettable that the spate of communal violence in the North – Central region of Nigeria is increasing both in frequency and cruelty. This ranges from the numbers of violent episodes recorded to the degree of damages resulting from the nefarious activities of the recruited militia and wanton application of sophisticated lethal weapons including chemical weapons.

Reports of cases of communal violence in the region from year 2013 to 2020 for instance, indicated that none of the six states of the North – Central geopolitical region of Nigeria was exempted from these inter – communal cycles of violence. According to Human Rights Watch (2014) report, several cases of violence were recorded in Bachit and Shonong communities in Riyom, Wase and Barkin Ladi communities in Plateau State killing several people. Similarly, in Benue State, with a majority of agrarian population has had some of the worst attacks in Logo, Makurdi, Buruku, Guma, Gwer West, Gwer East, Kwande, Ukum, Katsina - Ala and Agatu local government areas claiming more than 1000 lives. High tides of violence were also noticeable in Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa and Niger states with varying degrees of losses. Further reports by Financial Times (2019) indicate that communal violence between farmers and herders in central areas of Nigeria more likely driven by climate change, religion and new state laws on grazing rights had killed more people in 2018 than the violence in the north-east.

All these have made life in the affected rural communities of the region very squalid and deplorable forcing to a near close of agro-economic livelihood activities of the people thereby exacerbating the rural poverty situation. Consequently, many people live below poverty threshold line struggling to meet their basic needs especially, health, education, food, shelter and nutrition. The continuous exodus of the youth out of these communities to scamper for safety and greener pasture had also severed the challenge of food security and production capacities of the region making it more vulnerable.

If the claim of some experts that that poverty leads people to commit acts of violence (Justino, 2007; Corbett, 2009) is valid, it then implies that more violence would likely occur in the region which in turn entails more poverty scourge. The dire need therefore arises not just for the empirical evidence on violence and its effects on poverty but also to check the extremities of the duo in order to foster peace and pave way for sustainable (rural) development in Nigeria. This paper therefore aims at examining the effects of communal violence on rural poverty, the extent to which communal violence has extremely impoverished the rural populace in the north – central region of Nigeria and ways of minimising its spate in the region. The paper is divided into the following segments: introduction, literature review, methodology, findings and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

The concept of communal violence is derivative from the two words – community and violence. Macqueen et al. (2001) defined community as a group of people with diverse

characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings. Violence on the other hand, according to Mayowa (2001), is an act of inflicting physical, psychological or structural pain or injury on a person through the use of either rigorous physical force or the disempowerment of persons with respect to the two basic abilities of man – bodily capacities and decision – making abilities. World Health Organization (WHO) sees it as *“the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation”* (WHO, 2002).

Thus, communal violence according to Horowitz (2000), is a form of violence that is perpetrated across ethnic or communal lines, the violent parties feel solidarity for their respective groups, and victims are chosen based upon group membership. Similarly, Dzurgba (2006) was of the opinion that communistic violence is that which occurs between two or more communities over territorial land, farmland and territorial water for fishing. The term communal violence is commonly used in places like Asia and Africa to describe those incidents where conflict between ethnic communities result in massacres. Communal violence, as seen here, typically takes the form of mutual aggression, hostility and emotional fury in which members of all involved ethnic groups both perpetrate violence and serve as its victims.

Poverty on the other hand is seen as a state of inadequacy of resources required to meet the basic human needs such as food, shelter, clothing, acceptable levels of health and education etc; development policies; and access to power and other life improving opportunities of the people thereby making their living standard miserable and deplorable (Obadan, 2010; Akpehe, 2015).

Various factors have been identified by scholars as responsible for communal violence in the country though, varying from one area to another. Yecho (2006) opines that the causes of communal conflicts are not static but rather dynamic and varied in nature depending on the socio-economic and geopolitical circumstances at the time. Thus, the author pointed out the fundamental causes of communal violence to include: poor economic conditions, high level of illiteracy, the quest for, and fear of domination by other groups, land disputes, market ownership, chieftaincy tussle and party politics.

Mayowa (2001) on the other hand has identified the quest for liberty, equality and justice as well as contest for power, influence, resources, recognition and identity as major causes responsible for communal violence in Nigeria. Onwudiwe (2004) lists social conditions such as population explosion, economic migration, and the anti-poor policies of the government as triggers of communal friction. Thus, these authors conceived communal violence beyond resource allocation. Poor governmental policies and leadership are blamed to be causes of communal violence.

Furthermore, Albert (2001) identified indigene/settler problem, religious differences, ownership of land and its resources, goals and aspirations of people as some of the factors that can ignite communal conflict in the country.

In Benue state for instance, Varvar (2000) indicated that increased demand for land for agriculture, unemployment, rural hunger, poverty impoverishment as communal conflict triggers. Deprivation, exploitation and domination of minority groups by major ethnic groups and leadership problem were highlighted by Angya and Doki (2006) as factors that can exert communal crisis. Equally, religious differences, competition for livelihood resources and traditional chieftaincy tussles were enumerated by Oboh and Hyande (2006) as potential communal conflict triggers in the country. Competitions for land and chieftaincy tussle are the major causes of communal conflict in the North.

Best (2006) in (Alimba, 2014) argues that in Benue Valley, the pressure on land from all directions heightens the proliferation of ethnic and communal conflicts in the region, including the political ones, most of them arising from the land question. Similarly, Bekele (2014) maintains that communal violence, stoked by competition between local farming communities and nomadic herdsman, has plagued this region for many years and is spreading to other states in northern Nigeria. However, the failure of Nigerian authorities to investigate the attacks or bring those responsible to justice is likely to exacerbate the cycle of violence in the conflict-prone north central region. For instance, several cases of violence in Plateau State, Benue state, Nasarrawa, Kogi, Niger and Plateau etc. were attributed to land ownership, politics and religious factors.

The relationship between poverty and communal violence is complex as communal violence tends to affect disproportionately the poor. Poverty, in turn, feeds conflict as the lack of opportunities for the less well-off make them more prone to engage in risky behaviour, and institutions less likely to solve social conflicts in a peaceful manner. Human insecurity, the destruction of social capital, the weakening of institutions and the material losses of violence all tend to deepen poverty, thus creating a poverty-and-conflict trap, with enduring effects even in post-conflict situation (Justino, 2007).

In terms of the effects or impacts of communal violence on society thereby generating extreme poverty, Ojo, Eme and Nwabo (2015:5) maintain thus:

Violence has very often turned the people's attention from creative production to creative destruction. Bridges have been blown up, roads and railways destroyed, airports and seaports immobilized, and business enterprises as well as schools and hospitals destroyed or forced to operate below full capacity. Such violence has wasted human lives, generated refugees and other displaced persons, led to the proliferation of small arms within a region and caused the spread of a culture of violence such as war consciousness and militarism among the population. However, by far the most important consequence of communal conflict has been, and is, the loss of human lives. Many combatants and civilians are killed by direct military action, other means of violence, as well as by famine and starvation. Many others die from inadequate medical care and the shock of the fighting. Women, children and the aged are the major victims. Even those who survive the violence often retain its physical and psychological scars. Apart from children who are mentally deformed

as a result of severe malnutrition, others become alienated from society, including those forced to migrate from their homes either as refugees or internally displaced persons.

Similarly, Omatayo (2005) points out that the most worrisome aspect of communal violence lies in its tendency to involve massive destruction of lives and properties as well as disruption of social, political and economic lives of the larger population. Beyond the measurable costs, violence causes pain and suffering, can lead to chronic trauma, affects child development, and can increase the risk of chronic health outcomes later in life. It also affects communities and societies, leading to losses in business sectors, financial divestment, and increased burden on the healthcare and justice systems (National Academy of Sciences (NAOS), 2011).

The foregoing therefore implies that communal violence at any moment of its occurrence is typical of affecting agro-economic livelihood activities of the people, thereby forcing many to various levels of vulnerability.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Setting

North Central Nigeria also referred to as the “Middle Belt” is situated geographically around the confluence of the River Niger and the River Benue. The region spread from west to east thereby separating the Northern part of the country from the Southern one. It comprises a variety of minority ethnic groups and communities that are found predominantly in six states of Benue, Kwara, Kogi, Niger, Plateau, Nassarawa, and the Federal Capital Territory (Nigeria’s capital). The region according to the National Population Commission (2016), had a total of over 29,252,408 people (the current estimates may be higher). The North – Central region shared boundaries with Taraba and Bauchi states of the North – eastern geopolitical zone of the country; Kaduna, Kebbi and Zankara States of the North – west; Ekiti, Ondo, Osun and Oyo states of the South – west; Enugu and Ebonyi states in the South – east; and Cross – river and Edo states of the South – south. Violence in this region relates to ethnicity, religion, disputes over land, traditional leadership, political authority and fear of domination and marginalization.

3.2 Sampling Procedure/Population

The study employed clustered and purposive sampling techniques to select its respondents. Thus, the study adopted the six states and FCT as its clusters out of which two local government areas were selected from each state. Furthermore, five council wards were chosen from each local government area. Purposive sampling technique was then employed to draw 60 respondents (comprising males, females and youths) from each state and 45 respondents from FCT. This gives a total of 405 respondents to represent the entire population.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this study was elicited from both primary and secondary sources. The basic instruments designed to gather the primary data include; semi – structured questionnaires (SSQ) and key informant interviews (KII), while wealth ranking analysis was employed as a supplementary tool. Secondary data however was collected using official documentations. The data gathered for this study were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. It is worthy to note here that the analysis of poverty in this study was in line with most recent works on poverty that are based on money – metric measure of utility and welfare. A cut–off point of N365.00 (equivalent to 1.00 US Dollar) was adopted by the study to serve as a poverty line across the distribution of real household consumption-expenditure per adult equivalent. This cut – off point was used as an absolute line in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) to identify the poorest in the study area (World Bank, 2001; Yusuf, et al, 2009).

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1 Socio-Demographic Data of the Respondents

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents captured in this study include sex, marital status, age, occupation, educational attainment and income as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency (N= 405)	Percentage (% = 100)
A. Gender		
Female	189	46.67
Male	216	53.33
B. Respondents’ Marital Status		
Married	385	95.06
Single	20	4.94
C. Age Distribution of Respondents in Years		
18 – 30	97	23.95
31 – 64	262	64.69
65 and above	46	11.36
D. Respondents’ Occupation		
Farming	176	43.46
Business	148	36.54
Artisans	51	12.59
Civil Servants	21	5.19
Students	9	2.22
E. Respondents Educational Attainment		
Non – Literate	33	8.15
Primary	171	42.22
Secondary	133	32.84
Tertiary	68	16.79

F. Income Distribution of Respondents		
Per Annum (N)		
Below 50, 000	149	36.79
50, 000 – 99, 000	168	41.48
100, 000 & above	88	21.73

Source: Field Survey (2019).

Information on Table 1 above indicated that in terms of sex composition, 189(46.67%) respondents were males while 216 (53.33%) were female. With regards to marital status, 385 (95.06%) respondents were married, whereas 20 (4.94%) respondents were of the single category. Data on age also indicated that 97 (23.95%) respondents were of youth category with age bracket of 18-30 years, 262(64.69%) respondents were adults of active workforce with age range of 31- 64years, and 46(11.365%) respondents aged from 65years and above.

Furthermore, 176(43.46%) respondents had farming as their dominant occupation, 148(36.54%) respondents were businessmen/women, 51(12.59%) respondents were artisans, 21(5.19%) respondents were civil servants, while 9(2.22%) were students. The study also found out that 171(42.22%) respondents had attended and/or completed primary level of education, 133(32.84%) respondents had attained secondary school level, and 68(16.79%) respondents attained tertiary level of education, while 33(8.15%) respondents were non-literate.

Finally, the statistics on respondents’ current income status or purchasing power parity (PPP) as shown on the table depicts that 149(36.79%) respondents were living on income or (PPP) less than NGN 50,000.00 per annum (equivalent of USD 0.1 – USD 0.89 per day), 168(41.48%) respondents were on annual income or (PPP) of NGN 50,000.00 – NGN 99,999.99 (equivalent of USD 0.91 – USD 1.78 per day), whereas, 88(21.73%) respondents were earning an annual income of NGN 100,000.00 and above (equivalent of USD 1.80 and above per day).

4.2 Communal Violence and Extreme Poverty among Rural Farmers in North – Central Region

Findings of the study on the nature and trend of communal violence in the North – Central region of Nigeria revealed an increasing spate of violence along communal lines both in frequency and cruelty especially, from year 2014 - 2020. Majority (73.48%) of the respondents maintained that the region had recorded higher numbers of violent episodes in the rural areas in recent times with an attendant high degree of damages including loss of human lives, basic facilities and other valuables than in the suburbs (23.85%) and cities (2.67%). These information is displayed in Figure 1.

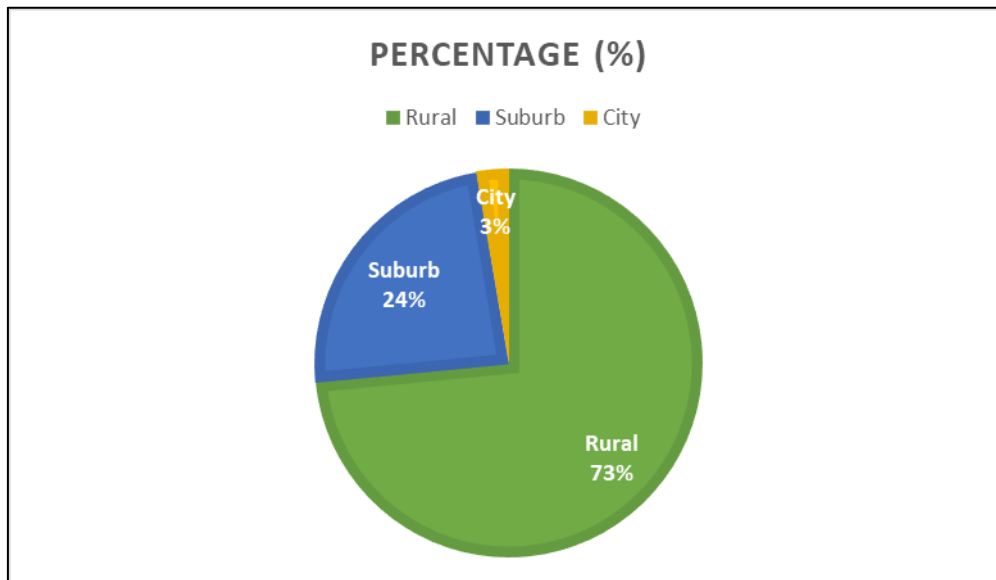


Figure 1: Prevalence of Communal Violence Location wise

Further findings also indicated that the violence between herders and farmers were the most persistent, cruellest and destructive episode the region had ever witnessed due to its increased engagement of local armed militia and wanton application of sophisticated lethal weapons including chemicals.

In terms of the precipitating factors fuelling communal violence in the region, assessment of the respondents' perception by the study showed that mere hatred, struggle over scarce resources such as land, water ponds, markets and economic trees; quest for grazing area, quest for power, sheer terrorism or cruelty and show of military might were the major causes of frequent communal crashes in the area. See details in Table 2.

Table 2: Causes of communal violence

Causes	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mere hatred	405	3.89	1.170
Struggle over resources (land, water, fish ponds, markets, economic trees, etc)	405	4.08	1.159
Quest for grazing area	405	4.13	1.148
Quest for power	405	3.68	1.229
Sheer terrorism or cruelty	405	4.11	1.007
Show of military might	405	3.87	1.040
Valid N (listwise)	405		

Source: Field Report (2019).

Using a 4-point Likert scale with 4 codes ranging from 'strongly agree to strongly disagree' gives a critical mean value of 3.0. All items with means above the critical mean of 3.0 were considered accepted by respondents while items with means below the critical mean of 3.0 were considered rejected by respondents. In Table 2 above, all the items have

means above the critical mean of 3.0, which means that respondents have accepted all the above assertions as reasons for communal violence in the area.

The study further discovered a strong relationship between communal violence and extreme poverty levels among victims during and after violence in the North – Central region. All the respondents maintained that communal violence had both short – term and long – term economic and social implications on individuals, households and their livelihoods. The persistent occurrence of violent crashes in the region had resulted to mindless killings of human lives, depletion of workforce, displacements and wanton destruction of basic amenities/ facilities. Others include: destruction of farm produce, burning down of houses, looting of household items (food and livestock), breakdown of agro–businesses and other economic activities including markets, breakdown of law and order, interpersonal relationships and desertion of the affected areas as well as causing fear, trauma and hyper reactions. See the details on Table 3 below.

Table 3: Effects of Communal Violence on Victims in North – Central Nigeria

Item description	None	Low	Moderate	High	Very high	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Destruction of farm produce	10	10	102	78	205	405	4.13	.966
2. Burning down of houses	26	52	64	119	144	405	3.75	1.243
3. Looting of household items	20	29	100	124	132	405	3.79	1.123
4. Destruction of basic amenities/facilities	16	128	84	104	73	405	3.22	1.186
5. Affect agro business and other economic activities	2	10	70	98	225	405	4.32	.879
6. Killing of human lives	1	86	106	78	134	405	3.64	1.156
7. Depletion of labour force	6	24	68	114	193	405	4.15	.998
8. Displacement of community members	7	21	59	100	218	405	4.24	.997
9. Mass exodus of the youths to urban areas	5	31	84	137	148	405	3.97	.996
10. Constant fear, maim and trauma	10	13	40	141	201	405	4.26	.938
11. Break down of law and order	20	26	83	108	168	405	3.93	1.149
12. Break down of interpersonal relationships	4	20	99	106	176	405	4.06	.982
							3.96	1.051

Source: Field Report (2019).

Using a 5-point Likert scale with codes 1-5 in Table 3 above gives a critical mean value of 3.0. All items with means above the critical mean 3.0 were considered accepted by respondents while items with means below the critical mean of 3.0 were considered rejected by respondents. Thus, all the items in Table 3 above have means above the critical mean of 3.0, which means that respondents have accepted all the above assertions as various ways through which communal violence can engender extreme poverty among the victims.

As indicated in Table 3 above, the incidence of communal violence apart from killing people most especially, the breadwinners and forcing women to become widows and heads of households as well as making children orphans thereby exposing them to more economic hardship, it displaces communities and make them residents of relief camps. On the camps, displaced victims were reported by informants to have suffered numerous challenges including overcrowding, acute food shortages, poor nutrition, lack of portable water, shelter and sanitary services, inadequate access to health care services, education, recreation and privacy which have further deepened their poverty level and vulnerability to especially women, children and the aged.

Further findings of the study have also shown that the outbreak of violence in the rural communities had forced most members to flee and abandon their livelihood activities including agriculture which is the backbone of their economic strength. Destruction of farmlands and agro – products, burning down of houses and food storages as well as looting of personal assets and belongings have further forced more than 75% of the victims to become dependents either on friends / relatives or government relief services which are not always sufficient to cater for their needs and their household. The shut – down of agricultural and other economic activities including markets by communal violence according to majority of the respondents (80%) have weakened the purchasing power parity (PPP) or capacities of the affected farmers to meet their basic life necessities and that of their family members hence, forcing them to extreme poverty. Investigations from key informants in Benue, Kogi, Nasarawa and Plateau states (where the spate of the incidence was high) further revealed some health related burdens that communal violence inflicted on victims especially, women to include physical and sexual assaults such as beating, slashing, abductions, nudity, breast sucking, inserting of objects into their private organs, mutilation and rape in the hands of local militants, security operatives and sometimes, relations whom they seek refuge from. These according to respondents, result to multiple health implications such as sexually transmitted diseases including HIV, vesico-vaginal fistula (VVF), unwanted pregnancies, miscarriages, fractures, trauma, shame, abdominal pains, high blood pressure and death. These health burdens further aggravates the poverty situation of individuals, families and community as it would not only undermine the livelihood of victims but also absorb the already scarce resources in paying of medical bills; increase the dependency ratios, deplete the farm labour force and weaken the production capacity of the victims thereby, forcing people into extreme poverty. These findings therefore corroborate those of Cramer (2009)

and Akpehe et al (2020) that violent attacks on the poor make them more vulnerable and deepen their poverty conditions.

The study also discovered that the increased spate of communal violence in the region has caused the closure of community - based health care facilities, local markets and rural schools as well as worship centers and agricultural extension service units in the affected communities. The closure of rural schools by the rising episodes of violence has increased the numbers of out of school children and child abuse tremendously in the area thereby creating a cycle of generational poverty that may likely affect even the unborn generations. Closure of health care facilities according to respondents had deprived farmers in the affected areas adequate access to health care services leading to increase in morbidity and mortality rates. The collapse of rural extension services and market services by communal violence were found by the study to have the living conditions of the affected rural farmers more deplorable.

A Chi-Square - based test of the significance and strength of the association between communal violence and extreme poverty also indicated a significant and strong relationship between the two variables (see Table 4 below).

Table 4: Communal Violence by Extreme Poverty in North Central Region of Nigeria

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	578.157 ^a	6	.000
Likelihood Ratio	597.464	6	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	323.919	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	405		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.52.			
Symmetric Measures			
		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	1.195	.000
	Cramer's V	.845	.000
N of Valid Cases		405	

The above statistical test found that the value of Chi-Square (X^2) in the association is = 578.157 at a degree of freedom (df) of = 6 and P value of 0.000. Since P – value is less than 0.05; it means that the variables are significantly associated. Furthermore, the measured strength of the association between communal violence and extreme poverty found the value of Cramer’s V to be = 0.85 indicating that the association is very strong. This implies therefore that communal violence might be responsible for more than 85% of the extreme poverty situations of rural farmers who suffered and/or survived its episodes in the North – Central area of Nigeria. In other words, communal violence and poverty are proportionally related as increase in violence level leads to an increase in rural poverty and vice – versa. Thus, there is a strong nexus between communal violence and extreme poverty. While the incidence of violence along communal lines breeds human insecurity and wanton destruction of lives, displacements, social capital, social infrastructures and other material losses which tend to deepen poverty situation of the victims, poverty

increases the level of frustration and aggression of the affected victims prompting them to take to violence at a slightest provocation. This finding therefore justifies Justino's earlier findings that there exist a complex relationship between conflict and poverty whereby conflict violence tends to affect disproportionately the poor, poverty, in turn, feeds conflict as the lack of opportunities for the less well-off make them more prone to engage in risky behaviour (Justino, 2007).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

On the whole, empirical evidences in the course of the study have shown a strong link between communal violence and extreme poverty among rural farmers in the study area. The rising spate of communal violence in the North – Central region of Nigeria had resultantly exacerbated the level of vulnerability, insecurity, destitution, extreme deprivation and misery among the rural farmers thereby exposing them to extreme poverty. Findings of the study identified the effects of communal violence to include: wanton destruction of human lives, property and other sources of livelihood, psychological trauma, food and health insecurity as well as displacement of small – holder rural farmers, making their living standards miserable and deplorable thereby increasing very extremely the rate of poverty in the area by 85 per cent. The paper therefore recommends immediate trial of perpetrators of violence no matter their positions and personalities. The study further recommends that there should be community – driven conflict management and resolution committees to resolve misunderstandings between the aggrieved parties timely before they escalate to violence. This may likely minimize the frequency of communal violence in the rural areas. Furthermore, the local and state governments and community – based organisations should put in place poverty alleviation schemes to help cushion the impacts of communal violence on victims especially, women and the aged during and after its occurrences. Finally, all stakeholders should support the existing agencies working with IDPs to provide succour and security to displaced poor farmers who are taking refuge in relief camps. These will help in improving the general well-being of the poor rural farmers who become more impoverished and vulnerable during and after violence in our local communities.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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