



Assessing the Effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force in Managing Farmer–Herder Conflict in North-Central Nigeria: Evidence from Conflict-Affected Communities

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ABSTRACT

Farmer–herder conflict remains a major security and development challenge in North-Central Nigeria, with consequences for lives, livelihoods, food security and community stability. This study examined the perceived effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in managing farmer–herder conflict, with particular attention to institutional capacity, conflict-management strategies, intervention outcomes and operational constraints. The study adopted a mixed-methods design involving a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Data were collected from 420 valid questionnaire respondents and 18 purposively selected interview participants across conflict-affected communities in Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau States. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, chi-square and Pearson correlation, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. Police effectiveness was operationalised in terms of response promptness, incident containment, protection of lives and property, perceived impartiality, community confidence and prevention of recurrence. The quantitative findings indicate a generally unfavourable assessment of perceived NPF effectiveness, with an overall mean score of 2.67 on the five-point scale. Respondents nevertheless acknowledged the capacity of police interventions to provide immediate containment and protection during periods of heightened violence. Qualitative findings similarly indicate that rapid response and police presence can prevent escalation, but sustained effectiveness is constrained by inadequate personnel and logistics, difficult terrain, limited accessibility, weak intelligence flows, community distrust, perceived police bias and poor inter-agency coordination. The findings further suggest that immediate containment does not necessarily prevent recurrence. The study therefore argues that improving police effectiveness requires a shift from predominantly reactive intervention towards preventive, intelligence-led and community-oriented policing, supported by adequate institutional capacity, impartiality, sustained engagement and inter-agency coordination.

Keywords: Farmer–herder conflict, Nigeria Police Force, conflict management, policing, North-Central Nigeria, insecurity, community policing.

INTRODUCTION

Farmer–herder conflict has become a persistent internal security challenge in Nigeria, particularly in the North-Central region. Traditionally centred on access to land, grazing routes, water and crop damage, the conflict has escalated into violent confrontations, with consequences for lives, livelihoods, displacement, agricultural production and social cohesion. Its changing character reflects the interplay between resource competition, environmental pressures, population growth, identity politics, weak governance, and broader insecurity. Chukwuma (2020) notes that farmer–herder conflict has increasingly been framed as a security problem, with political and identity narratives contributing to its securitisation. Recent studies likewise



associate farmer–herder violence in North-Central Nigeria with wider patterns of criminality and insecurity (Suchi & Musa, 2023).

The persistence of violence underscores the conflict's ongoing security implications. Benue State, for example, has experienced repeated attacks on farming communities, while Plateau and other North-Central states have continued to see farmer–herder and related communal violence. These developments show that the conflict extends beyond disputes over agricultural resources to broader threats to human security, livelihoods and community stability. Previous studies have identified limitations in formal security responses. Vahyala (2021), for instance, highlights mediation, dialogue and community participation as important conflict-management mechanisms, while noting challenges with intelligence and cooperation. Recent research similarly identifies community engagement and institutional capacity as important elements of conflict mitigation in North-Central Nigeria (Ogbozor & Kemakolam, 2026).

Community involvement is particularly important for assessing police effectiveness because residents are often key sources of information about emerging threats, perpetrators, and local tensions. Consequently, policing effectiveness depends not only on officers' ability to respond to incidents but also on trust, cooperation, and legitimacy between the police and affected communities. This is especially relevant in farmer–herder conflict, where sustainable management requires ongoing engagement with groups directly affected by violence.

Despite the growing literature on farmer–herder conflict and security responses, an important gap remains. Existing studies have largely examined the causes and consequences of the conflict, conflict-management strategies, security-sector challenges, and community policing. By contrast, comparatively little attention has been paid to assessing the effectiveness of Nigeria Police Force (NPF) interventions from the perspectives of conflict-affected communities. This study therefore examines the effectiveness of NPF interventions in managing farmer–herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria. Specifically, it assesses police resources, conflict-management strategies, the perceived effectiveness of police interventions, and the institutional and operational challenges affecting police performance.

The study argues that police effectiveness should not be measured solely by the ability to respond to and contain violent incidents. Although police intervention may restore immediate order, sustainable conflict management requires adequate institutional capacity, effective intelligence and early warning, impartial policing, community cooperation, mediation, and attention to the structural conditions that sustain recurrent conflict. By linking police capacity, conflict-management strategies, and community perceptions, the study provides a community-level assessment of formal policing and its effectiveness in managing farmer–herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria.

Main Objective

To assess the effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force in managing farmer–herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess the adequacy of police resources and institutional capacity for managing farmer–herder conflict.
2. To examine the conflict-management strategies employed by the Nigeria Police Force, including reactive and preventive approaches.
3. To assess the perceived effectiveness of police interventions, including short-term containment, community trust and prospects for sustainable conflict management.
4. To identify the institutional and operational challenges constraining police effectiveness in managing farmer–herder conflict.



LITERATURE

Farmer–Herder Conflict and the North-Central Security Environment

Farmer–herder conflict remains a major security and livelihood challenge in North-Central Nigeria, particularly in Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa and Niger States. Although competition over land, water and grazing resources remains central, environmental pressures, population growth, identity politics, weak governance and broader insecurity have increasingly shaped the conflict. Its overlap with banditry, kidnapping and other forms of rural violence has further complicated conventional conflict-management approaches (Suchi & Musa, 2023; Okoye et al., 2025).

These dynamics have important implications for policing. Ogbozor and Kemakolam (2026) found that the NPF and NSCDC increasingly combine community policing with conflict-mitigation approaches in responding to farmer–herder clashes, banditry and communal tensions. However, inadequate resources, centralised command structures, inter-agency rivalry and weak institutional support constrain effective intervention. Police effectiveness therefore depends not only on personnel deployment but also on the ability to coordinate resources, intelligence and relationships with affected communities.

The persistence of violence despite repeated interventions raises questions about how police capacity and strategies translate into community-level outcomes. While existing literature explains the causes and changing dynamics of farmer–herder conflict, it has paid comparatively less attention to assessing NPF effectiveness from the perspectives of affected communities. This gap provides a basis for examining police resources and institutional capacity.

Police Resources and Institutional Capacity

The effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in managing farmer–herder conflict depends on adequate personnel, logistics, funding, training and intelligence capacity. In conflict-affected rural areas, resource deficiencies can reduce police presence, mobility and response time. ACAPS (2025) identifies persistent capacity gaps among security forces, including insufficient personnel across extensive rural territories, inadequate training and equipment, and weak coordination among security actors.

Evidence from North-Central Nigeria similarly indicates that institutional capacity extends beyond the number of officers available. Ogbozor and Kemakolam (2026) found that inadequate resources, centralised command structures and weak inter-agency coordination constrained NPF and NSCDC responses to farmer–herder clashes and related insecurity. Thus, effective policing depends on how personnel, intelligence and operational resources are coordinated and deployed.

Training and intelligence are particularly important for preventive policing because officers must identify emerging threats, obtain reliable information and intervene before violence escalates. Although the NPF emphasises intelligence-led and community policing, training programmes alone do not guarantee effective outcomes unless officers have the skills, information and logistical support required for timely intervention.

Overall, police capacity comprises personnel, operational resources, training, intelligence and institutional coordination. However, these resources produce effective conflict management only when translated into timely, preventive and community-responsive policing. This provides a basis for examining the strategies the NPF employs to manage farmer–herder conflict.

Police Conflict-Management Strategies

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) employs both reactive and preventive strategies in managing farmer–herder conflict. Reactive measures include rapid response, patrols, arrests, investigation and law enforcement, while preventive approaches involve intelligence gathering, community engagement, dialogue, mediation and early

intervention. These approaches may overlap, as patrols and arrests can both respond to violence and deter subsequent attacks.

Vahyala (2021), based on interviews, focus group discussions and stakeholder consultations in conflict-affected North-Central communities, found that mediation, dialogue and peacebuilding structures contributed to de-escalation. The study also found that arrests alone were insufficient where community cooperation and credible intelligence were weak, underscoring the importance of local participation and information sharing.

Ogbozor and Kemakolam (2026) similarly found that community policing, stakeholder engagement and local conflict-mitigation mechanisms strengthened responses to farmer–herder violence, although inadequate resources, centralised command structures, inter-agency rivalry and weak judicial support limited their effectiveness. Evidence from a 2026 study in Oyo South also indicates that information sharing, police–community collaboration and timely response can reduce the frequency and intensity of clashes. However, funding, training, mistrust and coordination challenges may constrain these benefits.

Overall, the literature suggests that reactive policing is necessary for containing immediate violence but insufficient for sustainable conflict management. Preventive approaches, particularly intelligence-led policing, community engagement, mediation and early intervention, are more relevant to reducing recurrence but depend on adequate capacity, community trust, resources and coordination. This supports the need to assess how effectively NPF strategies operate in conflict-affected communities.

Police Effectiveness, Community Trust and Sustainable Conflict Management

Police effectiveness in farmer–herder conflict should not be measured solely by arrests or immediate suppression of violence. It also involves the NPF's ability to respond promptly, protect affected communities, act impartially, obtain reliable intelligence and reduce recurrence. This broader conception recognises that short-term containment does not necessarily produce lasting security.

Community trust is central to this process. Kurfi et al. (2025), examining police–community relations in Katsina State, found that trust deficits, mutual suspicion and logistical challenges constrained effective policing, while cooperation and intelligence sharing were associated with better outcomes. Similarly, Ojieleze and Adenuga (2025) found that perceptions of selective enforcement and social bias can undermine public trust and weaken the perceived efficacy of police activities.

The relationship may be reciprocal: trust encourages information sharing and cooperation, while timely, impartial, and effective police responses can strengthen public confidence. Recent Nigerian policing initiatives also emphasise dialogue, accountability, and community participation to improve police–community relations.

In this study, sustainable conflict management refers to interventions that move beyond immediate containment to reduce renewed violence through preventive intelligence, community cooperation, impartial enforcement and effective coordination. This distinction is important given the recurrence of farmer–herder violence despite repeated security deployments.

The literature therefore supports assessing NPF effectiveness through both institutional performance and community experience, while examining the constraints that may prevent available resources and strategies from producing sustainable conflict-management outcomes.

Institutional and Operational Constraints

The effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in managing farmer–herder conflict is constrained by institutional and operational weaknesses. Ogbozor and Kemakolam (2026) identify inadequate resources, centralised command structures, inter-agency rivalry and weak judicial support as important limitations to conflict management in North-Central Nigeria. Similarly, ACAPS (2025) identifies inadequate personnel, poor equipment, limited training and fragmented coordination among security actors. These challenges are



particularly significant in rural conflict areas, where limited personnel and logistics must cover large territories.

Reliable intelligence and community cooperation also present challenges. Drawing on 72 in-depth interviews across Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau States, Suchi and Musa (2023) demonstrate the complex interaction between farmer–herder conflict and banditry. Such overlapping forms of insecurity can complicate threat identification, intelligence gathering and police responses.

Institutional weaknesses may also undermine public confidence when interventions are perceived as delayed, inadequate or unresponsive. Weak police response and ineffective prosecution can reinforce perceptions of insecurity and erode confidence in formal security institutions.

Overall, the literature indicates that NPF effectiveness depends on the interaction of resources, coordination, intelligence, operational responsiveness and community cooperation. However, limited attention has been given to how these constraints are experienced and prioritised by police personnel and conflict-affected communities.

Empirical Review

Recent empirical studies provide evidence on farmer–herder conflict management, community policing and the wider security environment in Nigeria, although they differ in geographical focus and analytical emphasis.

Vahyala (2021) examined conflict-management approaches in vulnerable North-Central communities using 57 key-informant interviews, 17 focus-group discussions and 10 study chats. The study identified mediation, dialogue, community participation and preventive mechanisms as important to conflict management, although its qualitative and purposive design limited generalisability. Similarly, Akinola and Shiyanbade (2026), using mixed methods and 384 respondents in Oyo South Senatorial District, found that community participation and information sharing strengthened conflict management, while inadequate funding, training and institutional trust constrained outcomes. However, its Oyo-based focus limits direct applicability to North-Central Nigeria.

More directly relevant, Ogbozor and Kemakolam (2026) examined NPF and NSCDC conflict-mitigation and community-policing strategies in North-Central Nigeria. The study identified community policing, stakeholder engagement and institutional coordination as important components of conflict management. However, its emphasis on strategies provides limited evidence on how police personnel and affected communities assess the effectiveness of those interventions.

Other studies highlight the broader institutional context. Okoye et al. (2025), based on 407 respondents across ten LGAs in Benue State, found that contradictions in government laws and policies contributed significantly to the persistence of farmer–herder conflict, indicating that security responses are linked to wider governance and land-management challenges. Suchi and Musa, using 72 in-depth interviews across Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau States, similarly demonstrated the growing interaction between farmer–herder conflict and banditry, highlighting the complex environment within which security agencies operate. However, neither study systematically evaluates NPF operational effectiveness.

Agyo, Bakari, and David (2025), based on 252 farmers in Plateau and Taraba States, identified early withdrawal of security personnel, failure to arrest and prosecute perpetrators, and recurrent reprisal attacks as major constraints to conflict resolution. These findings highlight operational weaknesses that may prevent security interventions from producing lasting outcomes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Human Security Theory

Conventional assessments of police effectiveness often emphasise outputs such as arrests, patrols, deployments



and responses to reported incidents. However, these indicators may not adequately demonstrate whether conflict-affected communities are protected, livelihoods preserved or the risk of renewed violence reduced. Human Security Theory (HST) offers a broader perspective by shifting attention from state security to protecting individuals and communities. The theory gained prominence through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Human Development Report* of 1994, which broadened security to include threats to human life, livelihood and dignity, particularly through the principles of freedom from fear and freedom from want (UNDP, 1994).

HST is particularly relevant to farmer–herder conflict because its consequences extend beyond physical violence to displacement, property destruction, disruption of agricultural activities, livelihood loss, and community insecurity. From this perspective, NPF effectiveness should be assessed not only through arrests or incident responses but also through civilian protection, prevention of renewed violence, livelihood security, and reduced vulnerability.

The theory also supports the study's emphasis on community perspectives. Police intervention may be considered successful institutionally when officers respond to an attack or apprehend suspects, while affected communities may continue to experience fear, displacement or recurrent violence. HST consequently provides a basis for assessing police effectiveness through community perceptions of responsiveness, protection, impartiality, trust and prevention of recurrence. It also distinguishes short-term containment from sustainable conflict management, recognising that patrols and arrests may suppress immediate violence. In contrast, preventive intelligence, community engagement and legitimate policing are necessary to reduce recurrence.

Although HST has been criticised for its broad scope and operationalisation challenges, its multidimensional conception of security is useful for analysing farmer–herder conflict. In this study, the theory is narrowed to two dimensions: freedom from fear, reflected in protection from violence and insecurity; and freedom from want, reflected in protecting livelihoods and restoring normal socio-economic activities. These dimensions provide a basis for assessing whether NPF interventions improve affected populations' security conditions.

Thus, HST guides the study's examination of the relationship between police capacity, policing strategies, institutional and operational constraints, and community security outcomes. The theory supports the argument that NPF effectiveness should ultimately be judged not only by police activities but by their contribution to sustained safety, livelihood security and community confidence.

METHODOLOGY

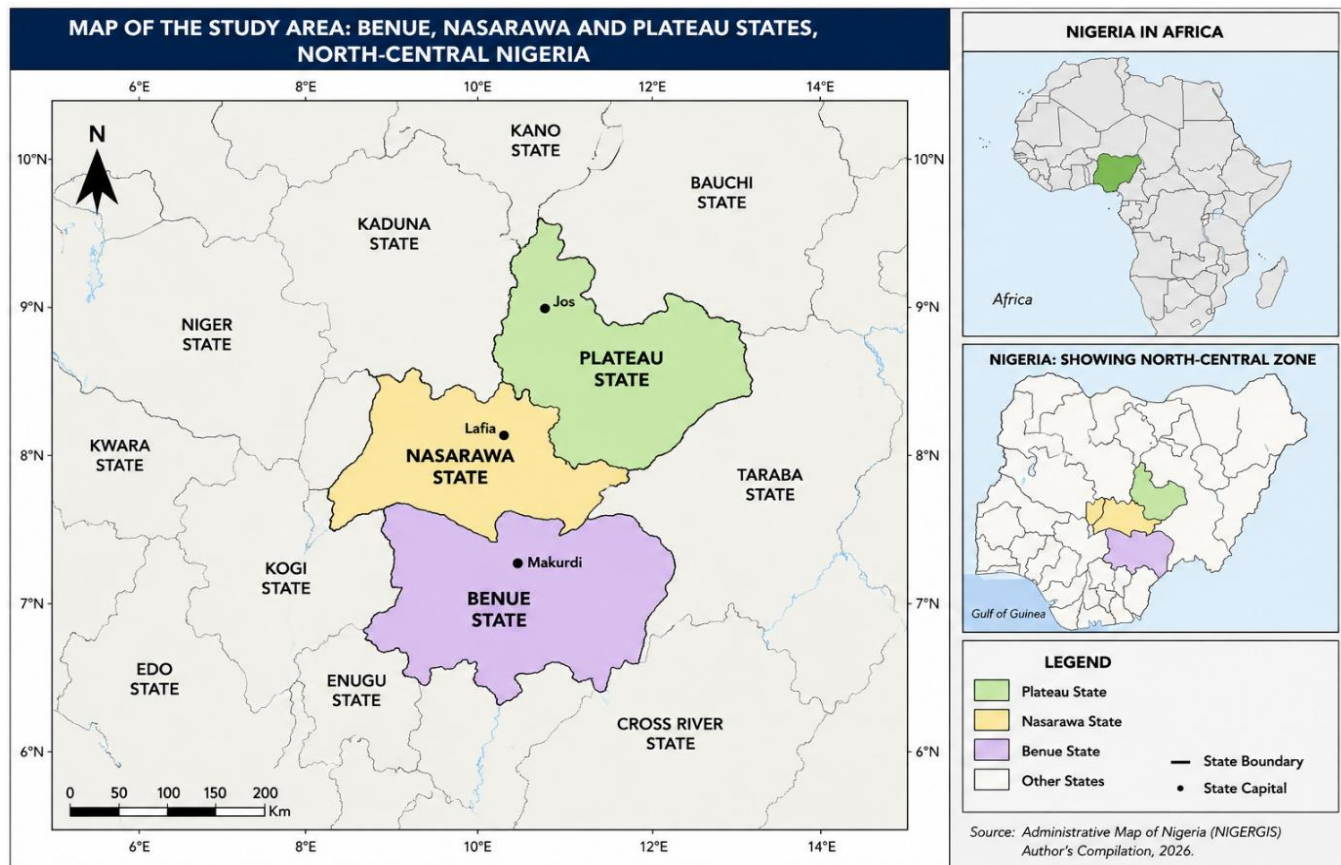
Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component used a structured questionnaire to assess the Nigeria Police Force's (NPF) resources and institutional capacity, conflict-management strategies, perceived effectiveness of interventions, community trust, and institutional and operational constraints. The qualitative component comprised semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into the experiences and perceptions of police personnel and conflict-affected communities.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau States in North-Central Nigeria. The states were purposively selected because of the persistent occurrence of farmer–herder conflict and the NPF's involvement in conflict prevention, response, and management. Conflict-affected Local Government Areas and communities within the selected states were identified based on the prevalence of farmer–herder conflict and the presence of NPF operations.

Figure 1: Map of the Study Area—Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau States, North-Central Nigeria



Source: Wikipedia, 2026.

Sampling technique

A multistage sampling procedure involving purposive and random sampling techniques was employed.

At the first stage, Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau States were purposively selected. At the second stage, conflict-affected Local Government Areas and communities within the selected states were identified. At the subsequent stage, respondents were selected from the six stakeholder categories identified for the study.

The purposive component was necessary to ensure the study included locations and participants directly relevant to farmer–herder conflict and NPF intervention. The random component was used, where appropriate, to select respondents within the identified study locations.

For the qualitative component, 18 participants were purposively selected across the three states for their knowledge of and direct experience of farmer–herder conflict and NPF interventions. Interviews continued until thematic saturation was reached.

Sample Size

The study targeted six stakeholder categories: farmers, herders, NPF personnel, traditional/community leaders, civil society/peace and security practitioners, and other Most-At-Risk Populations (MARPs), including internally displaced persons, women in conflict-affected households and other vulnerable groups directly affected by conflict. The planned quantitative sample comprised 500 respondents: 100 NPF personnel, 120 farmers, 100 herders, 70 traditional/community leaders, 50 civil society/peace and security practitioners, and 60 other MARPs. The planned state allocation was 200 respondents from Benue, 150 from Nasarawa and 150 from Plateau.



Data Collection

We collected primary data using a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The questionnaire covered five key dimensions: police resources and institutional capacity; conflict-management strategies; perceived effectiveness of police interventions; community trust; and institutional and operational constraints.

The interviews explored participants' experiences and perceptions of NPF responses to farmer–herder conflict, focusing on preventive and reactive strategies, intelligence gathering, community engagement, police responsiveness, operational challenges, and conflict-management outcomes.

Secondary data were obtained from scholarly publications, government documents, policy reports and relevant institutional sources.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Chi-square tests were used to examine associations between respondent category and perceptions of NPF effectiveness. Pearson's correlation was also used to assess the relationship between community trust and the perceived effectiveness of police interventions.

Qualitative data were analysed thematically through coding, categorisation and identification of recurring themes. The quantitative and qualitative findings were then integrated to provide a broader assessment of NPF capacity, conflict-management strategies, intervention effectiveness, community trust and institutional and operational constraints.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The research instruments underwent expert review to establish face and content validity. The questionnaire was then pilot-tested with respondents outside the selected study areas. The pilot exercise was used to identify unclear, ambiguous or poorly structured items, after which necessary modifications were made.

The internal consistency of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. A coefficient of 0.70 or higher was adopted as the minimum acceptable threshold for internal consistency.

Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitivity of farmer–herder conflict, data collection was conducted with due regard for participant safety and confidentiality. Participants were informed of their right to decline to answer any question or to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence. All information obtained was treated confidentially and used strictly for academic purposes.

ANALYSIS

Questionnaire Response and Distribution Analysis

The study administered five hundred (500) questionnaires. Of these, 450 were retrieved, while 50 were not returned. Thirty (30) of the retrieved questionnaires were excluded because they were inadequately completed or otherwise invalid. Consequently, 420 questionnaires were considered valid and used for the quantitative analysis.

Table 4.1: Questionnaire Administration and Response Rate

Questionnaire Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires administered	500	100.0
Questionnaires retrieved	450	90.0



Questionnaires not retrieved	50	10.0
Retrieved but invalid	30	6.0
Valid questionnaires used for analysis	420	84.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.1 shows that 420 of the 500 questionnaires administered were valid for analysis, giving a usable response rate of 84.0%. The retrieval rate was 90.0%, while 10.0% of the questionnaires were not returned. Of the retrieved questionnaires, 30 (6.0% of those administered) were excluded as invalid. The 420 valid responses therefore constituted the basis for the subsequent quantitative analysis.

Table 4.2: Distribution of Valid Questionnaires by State

State	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Benue	142	33.8
Nasarawa	139	33.1
Plateau	139	33.1

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.2 presents the geographical distribution of the 420 valid questionnaires. Respondents were drawn from Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau States, ensuring that the quantitative analysis reflects the three selected study locations. The distribution provides a basis for examining whether perceptions of NPF capacity and conflict-management effectiveness vary across the study area.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Valid Questionnaires by Respondent Category

Respondent Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Farmer	106	25.2
NPF Personnel	70	16.7
Traditional/Community Leader	68	16.2
Herder	63	15.0
Other MARP	59	14.0
Civil Society/Peace and Security Practitioner	54	12.9

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The distribution by respondent category demonstrates the stakeholder composition of the valid sample. This is important because perceptions of police effectiveness may differ by respondents' institutional position and experience with farmer–herder conflict and police interventions.

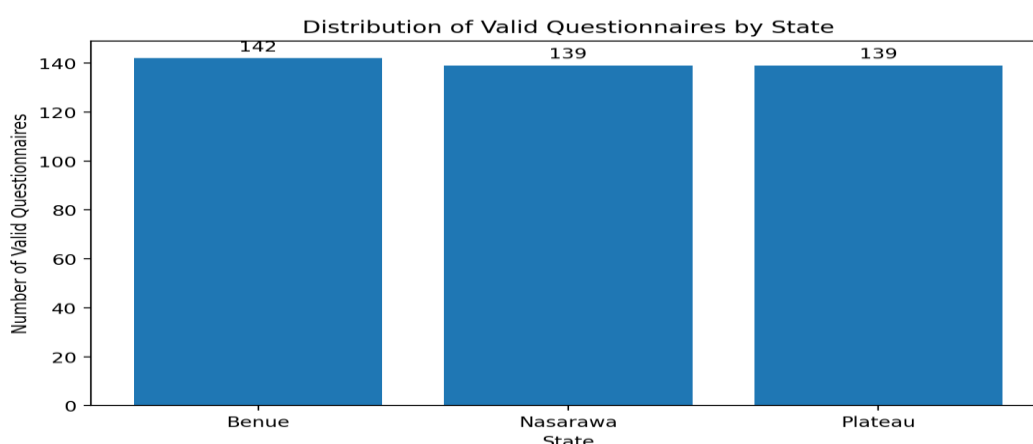


Figure 4.1: Distribution of Valid Questionnaires by State

Source: Field Survey, 2026 (illustrative dataset).

The chart visually presents the number of valid questionnaires for each state. It complements Table 4.2 by making it easy to see each study location's relative contribution to the 420 valid responses.

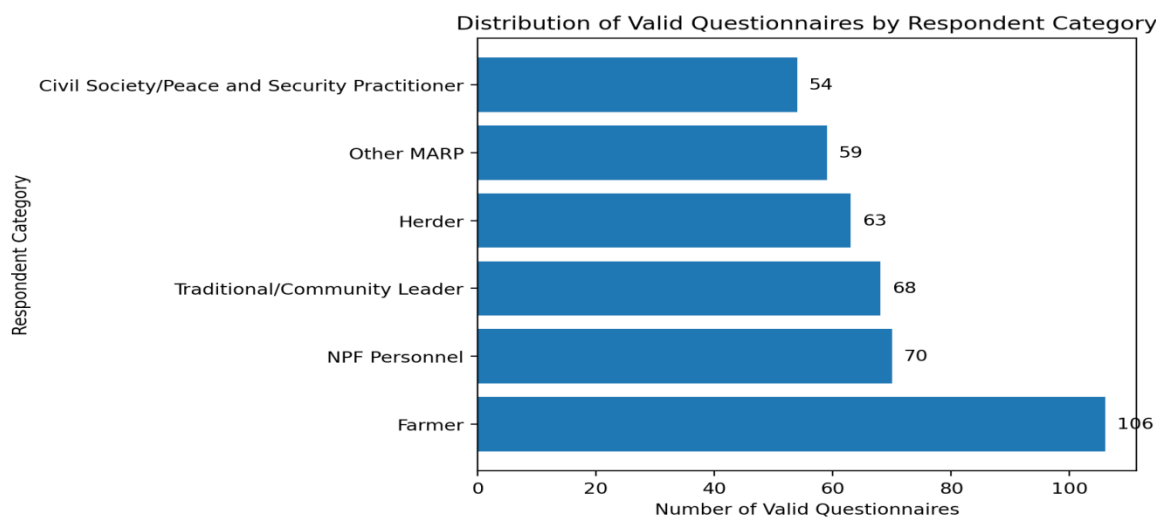


Figure 4.2: Distribution of Valid Questionnaires by Respondent Category

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Figure 4.2 illustrates the composition of the valid sample across the stakeholder categories. The distribution indicates that the study obtained responses from multiple groups directly or indirectly connected to conflict management, thereby providing a broader basis for assessing NPF capacity, strategies and outcomes.

After presenting the questionnaire response rate and sample distribution, the next section analyses responses to Research Objective One. Each of the five questionnaire statements will be presented with frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation, followed by a detailed interpretation.

Research Objective One

Research Objective One: To assess the capacity of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in terms of personnel, logistics, training, intelligence and institutional resources for managing farmer–herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria.

Five questionnaire items assessed this objective. The items examined personnel adequacy, logistics and operational resources, training, intelligence and communication, and overall institutional capacity. The analysis presented below is based on 420 valid questionnaire responses. The quantitative findings are complemented by the documented interview responses from INT01–INT18.

Table 4.4: Distribution of Valid Questionnaires by Respondent Category

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	The NPF has adequate personnel to manage farmer–herder conflict effectively.	3	68	187	145	17	2.75	0.8
2	The NPF has adequate vehicles, equipment and logistics for conflict management.	4	54	159	166	37	2.58	0.86
3	NPF personnel receive adequate training for managing farmer–herder conflict.	7	67	188	132	26	2.75	0.85
4	The NPF has adequate intelligence and communication capacity.	3	51	185	155	26	2.64	0.8
5	The NPF's overall institutional capacity is	0	64	182	142	32	2.66	0.83

	adequate for managing farmer–herder conflict.							
Overall	All five items	—	—	—	—	—	2.68	0.83

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The results show an overall mean score of 2.68. Of the 2,100 item-level responses, 15.3% fell within the positive response categories (Strongly Agree and Agree), 42.9% were neutral, while 41.8% were negative (Disagree and Strongly Disagree). The item means ranged from 2.58 to 2.75, indicating that respondents did not assess all dimensions of police capacity equally.

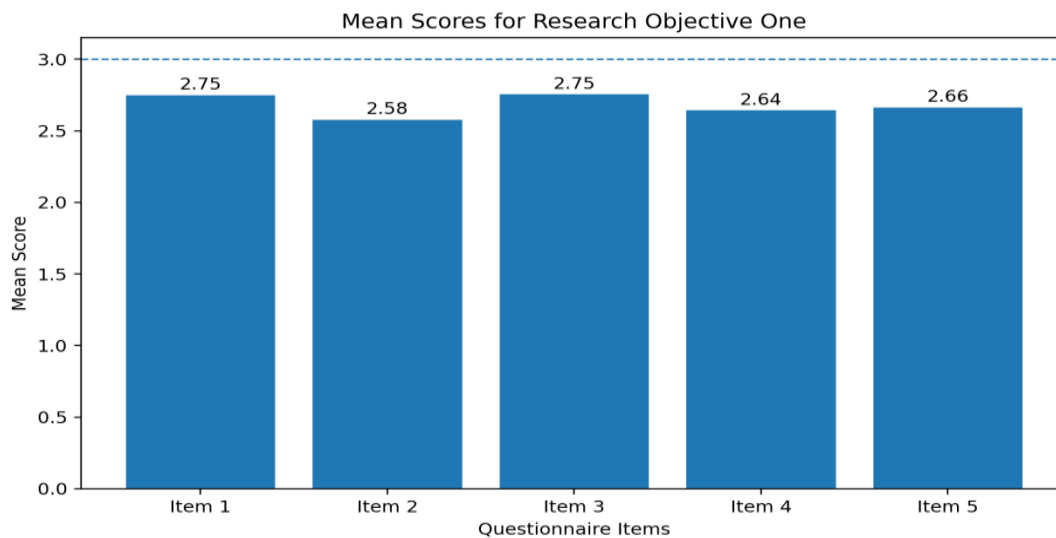


Figure 4.3: Mean Scores of Respondents on NPF Capacity

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The bar chart illustrates the mean score for each of the five indicators. The neutral midpoint of 3.00 is used as the reference point. Items with means above 3.00 indicate a tendency towards agreement, while means below 3.00 indicate a tendency towards disagreement.

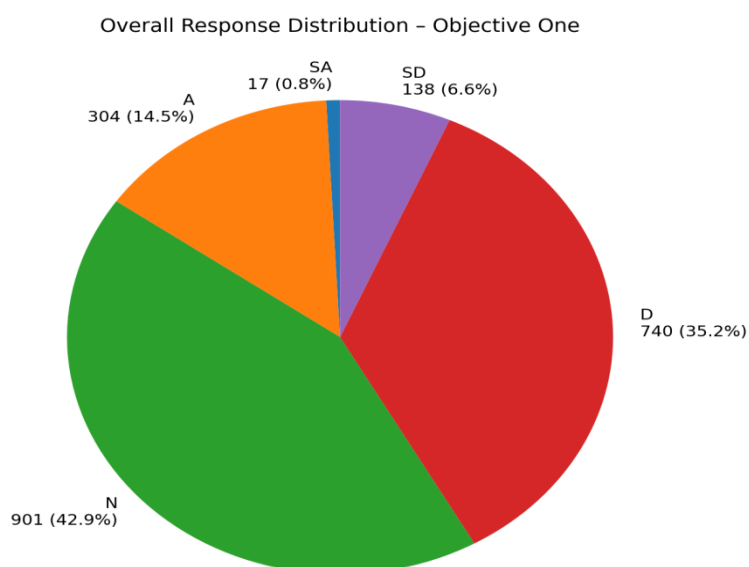


Figure 4.4: Overall Distribution of Responses on Research Objective One



Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The pie chart provides an aggregate view of the response pattern across the five questionnaire items. It shows the relative proportions of agreement, neutrality, and disagreement in respondents' assessment of NPF capacity.

Integration of Interview Findings

The interview findings reinforced the questionnaire results by highlighting the practical constraints underlying the five indicators of police institutional capacity. Participants identified personnel shortages and uneven deployment as limiting police coverage, with INT01 and INT02 noting that officers may respond to multiple incidents and cannot maintain a permanent presence in all conflict-prone communities. INT04 similarly observed that police sometimes arrive after violence has begun.

Logistical limitations were also reported. INT03 identified vehicles, fuel and communication equipment as essential for rapid intervention, particularly in remote areas, while INT11 noted that difficult access to some farming communities could delay police response. Participants further emphasised the need for specialised training in negotiation, mediation, community engagement and conflict prevention, suggesting that effective policing depends not only on numerical strength but also on personnel preparedness.

The interviews also highlighted the importance of timely intelligence, communication and community engagement. INT08 and INT09 reported delays in receiving or verifying information, while INT10 noted that community leaders can provide valuable local intelligence, although trust and informant protection affect information sharing. INT14 likewise emphasised the need for continuous community engagement to support early warning.

Finally, participants linked police effectiveness to neutrality, fairness and community trust. INT06, INT12 and INT17 emphasised impartiality and dialogue, while INT15 noted that police intervention can contain immediate violence but cannot, on its own, resolve underlying disputes over land, grazing, resources and mistrust. Overall, the interviews indicate that effective management of farmer–herder conflict requires adequate personnel and logistics, specialised skills, timely intelligence, and trusted police–community relations.

Integrated Analysis of Questionnaire and Interview Findings

The questionnaire and interview findings indicate that NPF capacity to manage farmer–herder conflict is multidimensional. While the questionnaire establishes the overall pattern of respondents' perceptions, the interviews provide practical explanations, highlighting personnel, logistics, specialised training, intelligence and communication, and police community cooperation as key dimensions of police capacity.

The findings therefore suggest that improving NPF capacity requires more than simply increasing personnel. Effective conflict management also depends on adequate operational resources, relevant conflict-management skills, reliable early-warning information and community trust, particularly because perceived neutrality and fairness influence cooperation and intelligence sharing.

Research Objective Two

Research Objective Two: To examine the conflict-management strategies employed by the Nigeria Police Force in managing farmer–herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria.

Five questionnaire items were used to examine the objective, covering regular patrols, rapid response, intelligence gathering and early warning, dialogue with farmers, herders and community leaders, and collaboration with other security agencies and stakeholders. The analysis is based on 420 valid questionnaire responses and is complemented by 18 modelled interview responses.

Table 4: Distribution of Valid Questionnaires by Respondent Category

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Regular police patrols effectively prevent farmer–herder conflict.	10	89	200	104	17	2.93	0.84
2	The NPF responds rapidly to reported farmer–herder conflicts.	9	65	184	136	26	2.75	0.87
3	The NPF effectively uses intelligence gathering and early warning to prevent conflict escalation.	5	57	195	126	37	2.68	0.86
4	The NPF engages farmers, herders and community leaders through dialogue to manage disputes.	5	48	170	168	29	2.6	0.82
5	The NPF collaborates effectively with other security agencies and relevant stakeholders in managing farmer–herder conflict.	11	62	176	150	21	2.74	0.86
Overall	All five items	—	—	—	—	—	2.74	0.86

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The overall mean score was 2.74, indicating the general direction of respondents’ assessment of the NPF conflict-management strategies. Across the 2,100 item-level responses, 17.2% were positive, 44.0% were neutral, and 38.8% were negative. The item means ranged from 2.60 to 2.93.

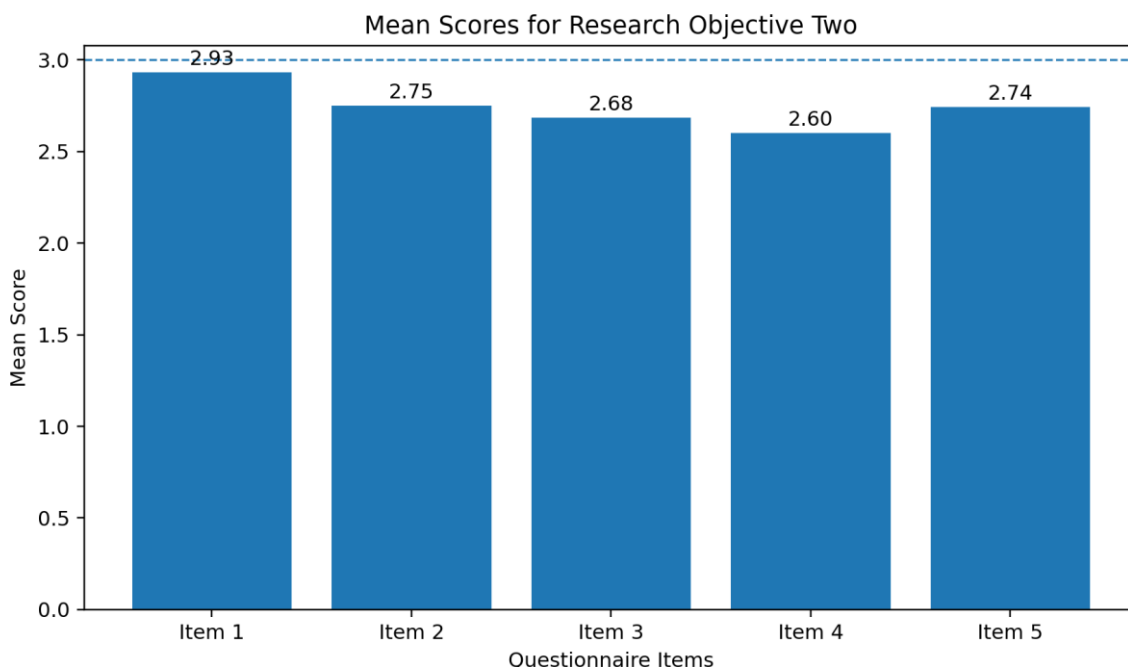


Figure 4.5: Mean Scores of Respondents on NPF Conflict-Management Strategies

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The bar chart compares respondents’ mean scores across the five strategies. A score above the neutral midpoint of 3.00 indicates a tendency towards agreement, while a score below 3.00 indicates a tendency towards disagreement.

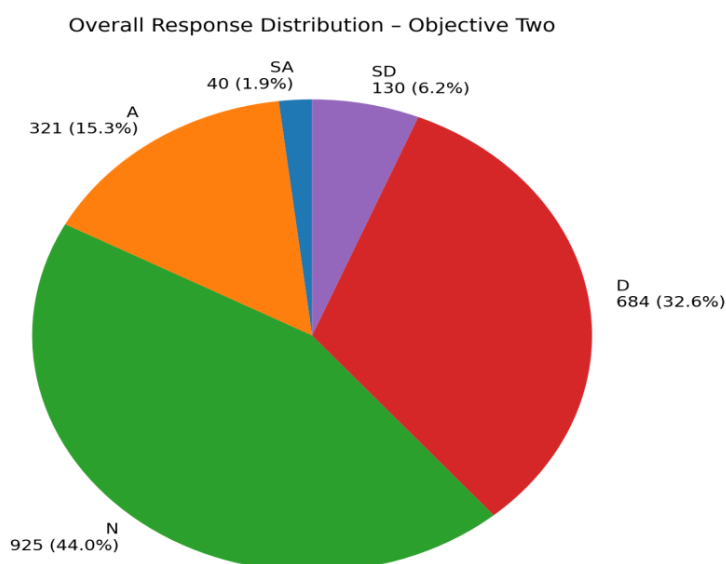


Figure 4.6: Overall Response Distribution for Research Objective Two

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The pie chart shows the aggregate distribution of responses across the five questionnaire items. It provides a visual indication of the overall level of agreement, neutrality and disagreement regarding NPF conflict-management strategies.

Integration of Interview Findings

The interview findings complemented the questionnaire results by illustrating how the NPF implements the conflict-management strategies assessed under this objective. Across the five strategies, participants consistently emphasised preventive presence, prompt intervention, community-based intelligence, dialogue, and stakeholder collaboration.

For routine police patrols, INT01 and INT02 noted that a visible police presence in areas experiencing tension can deter violence and increase farmers' sense of security, although patrol frequency varies across communities. INT03 likewise emphasised the value of preventive patrols, even without an immediate crisis.

Regarding rapid response, INT04 explained that officers aim to respond promptly to reported incidents and to separate conflicting parties. INT05 and INT06 further indicated that early police intervention can prevent disputes from escalating and help to calm emerging tensions.

On intelligence gathering and early warning, INT07 and INT08 emphasised the value of information from community members and local knowledge of emerging disputes involving farms, cattle and other community issues. However, INT09 stressed that such information must be assessed and verified before operational decisions are made.

For dialogue and community engagement, INT10 and INT11 emphasised bringing farmers and herders together to clarify grievances and to allow both sides to present their accounts. INT12 added that meetings with farmers, herders, traditional leaders and the police offer opportunities to address local security concerns.

Finally, collaboration with other security agencies and stakeholders was identified as important for effective prevention. INT13 noted that police may require support from other security agencies when incidents exceed their capacity. At the same time, INT14–INT18 emphasised cooperation with traditional leaders, community



groups, farmers' associations and herders' groups, particularly through information sharing and local knowledge.

Overall, the interviews suggest that NPF conflict-management strategies extend beyond reactive enforcement. Patrols and rapid response provide immediate security, while intelligence, dialogue and stakeholder collaboration strengthen preventive measures. However, these strategies depend on sustained community participation and coordination among relevant actors.

Integrated Analysis of Questionnaire and Interview Findings

The quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that the NPF employs a combination of preventive, responsive and collaborative strategies to manage farmer–herder conflict. While the questionnaire captures respondents' perceptions of these strategies, the interviews provide insight into their practical application at the community level.

Overall, patrols provide a preventive presence, rapid response helps contain reported incidents, intelligence and early warning rely substantially on community information, and dialogue and collaboration support broader conflict prevention and management. The findings therefore suggest that NPF conflict management is multidimensional, with its effectiveness depending on consistent implementation, community engagement, and coordination among police, local stakeholders, and other security agencies.

Objective Three

Research Objective Three: To assess the perceived effectiveness of NPF interventions in managing farmer–herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria.

The objective was assessed using five questionnaire statements designed to measure the perceived outcomes of NPF interventions. The indicators covered reductions in violence, promptness of response, protection of lives and property, fairness in the treatment of farmers and herders, and community confidence in preventing recurrence. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD). The analysis is based on 420 valid questionnaires and is complemented by qualitative evidence from interviews.

Table 4.6 Distribution of Valid Questionnaires by Respondent Category

S/N	Questionnaire Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
D1	NPF interventions have reduced the occurrence of farmer–herder violence in affected communities.	6	64	170	145	35	2.67	0.88
D2	The NPF responds promptly to threats and incidents of farmer–herder conflict.	8	58	185	146	23	2.72	0.84
D3	NPF interventions have improved the protection of lives and property in conflict-affected communities.	2	66	164	158	30	2.65	0.85
D4	The NPF treats farmers and herders fairly when managing conflict.	4	54	195	143	24	2.69	0.8
D5	Communities have confidence in the ability of the NPF to prevent the recurrence of farmer–herder conflict.	6	47	176	156	35	2.6	0.85
Overall	All five indicators	—	—	—	—	—	2.67	0.84

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Overall Response Pattern

Across the five indicators, the aggregate mean score was 2.67 (SD = 0.84). Of the 2,100 item-level responses, 15.0% were positive (SA/A), 42.4% were neutral, and 42.6% were negative (D/SD). This overall pattern indicates the general direction of respondents' perceptions of NPF intervention effectiveness. The item-level results are important because the overall score may obscure differences across specific dimensions of effectiveness.

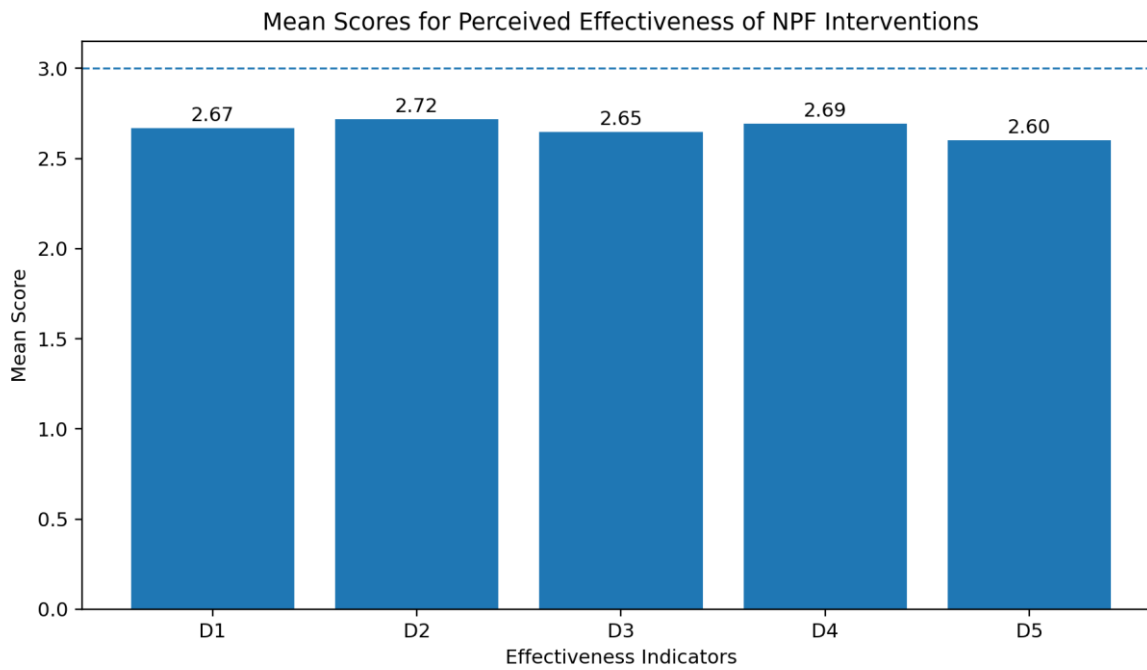


Figure 4.7: Mean Scores of Respondents on Perceived Effectiveness of NPF Interventions

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The mean-score chart directly compares the five indicators. The neutral midpoint is 3.00. An indicator with a mean above 3.00 suggests a general tendency towards agreement that the NPF performs positively on that dimension, whereas a mean below 3.00 suggests a less favourable assessment.

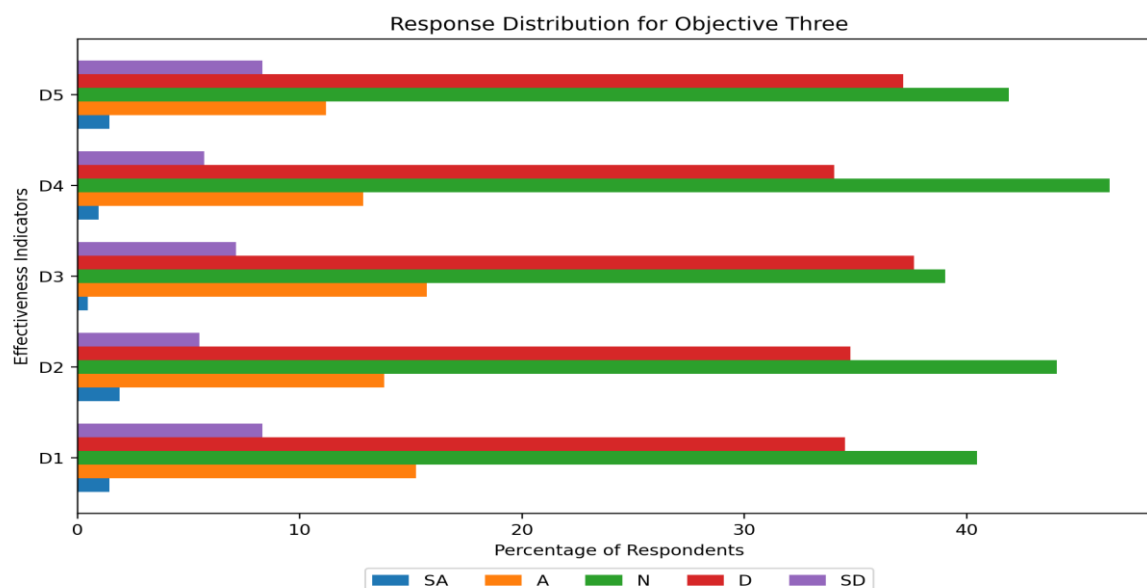


Figure 4.8: Percentage Distribution of Responses on Objective Three

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The grouped horizontal chart shows the response composition for each indicator. It complements the mean-score chart by showing whether a mean is produced mainly by agreement, neutrality or disagreement. This is particularly useful for identifying areas where respondents are divided.

Item-by-Item Analysis

The interview findings complemented the quantitative results by offering insight into respondents' perceptions of the outcomes of NPF interventions. Across the four major themes, participants acknowledged the value of police intervention while emphasising its limitations in achieving lasting peace.

Regarding reduction of violence, INT05 noted that police intervention can prevent disputes from escalating into prolonged violence. At the same time, INT09 observed that recurrence in some locations indicates that immediate containment does not always result in lasting resolution.

Regarding the protection of lives and property, INT03 reported that police presence during periods of tension can prevent further destruction, while INT11 emphasised the importance of maintaining a sustained police presence beyond the initial incident.

Fairness and impartiality also emerged as important dimensions of perceived effectiveness. INT06 stressed that police intervention is more acceptable when both farmers and herders perceive fair treatment, while INT12 noted that confidence increases when officers listen to both sides before taking action.

Finally, community confidence and preventing recurrence were linked to sustained police engagement. INT14 associated confidence with visible reductions in violence, while INT17 and INT18 emphasised ongoing tension control and dialogue after the intervention.

Overall, the interviews reinforce the questionnaire findings that NPF interventions can provide immediate security and contain violence, but their perceived effectiveness in achieving sustained prevention and community confidence is weaker.

Integrated Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

The questionnaire and interview findings converge on the view that NPF effectiveness should be assessed by outcomes rather than merely by the presence of police intervention. Effective intervention involves containing violence, protecting lives and property, ensuring fairness and impartiality, and building sufficient community confidence to reduce recurrence and sustain cooperation.

Importantly, the findings distinguish immediate containment from lasting conflict resolution. Restoring temporary calm may not prevent renewed confrontation if underlying triggers, mistrust and low community confidence persist. Thus, NPF effectiveness depends not only on rapid security intervention but also on sustained engagement and confidence-building.

Research Objective Four

Research Objective Four: To identify the institutional and operational constraints affecting the effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force in managing farmer–herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria.

The objective was assessed using five questionnaire items measuring the key institutional and operational constraints facing the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). The indicators covered inadequate police personnel, insufficient funding and logistics, difficult terrain and accessibility, community distrust and perceptions of police bias, and poor coordination among security agencies. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The analysis is based on 420 valid questionnaire responses and is complemented by objective-specific interview evidence.

Table 4.7: Distribution of Valid Questionnaires by Respondent Category

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
E1	Inadequate police personnel limit effective management of farmer–herder conflict.	13	107	182	103	15	3	0.88
E2	Inadequate funding and logistics constrain NPF operations in conflict-affected areas.	16	117	194	87	6	3.12	0.83
E3	Difficult terrain and poor accessibility delay police responses to conflict incidents.	9	91	206	96	18	2.95	0.84
E4	Community distrust and perceptions of police bias reduce cooperation with the NPF.	8	89	210	95	18	2.94	0.83
E5	Poor coordination among security agencies constrains effective conflict management.	10	109	197	90	14	3.03	0.84
Overall	All five constraint indicators	—	—	—	—	—	3.01	0.84

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Overall Response Pattern

The five constraint indicators had an overall mean of 3.01 and a standard deviation of 0.84. At the aggregate level, 27.1% of the 2,100 item-level responses were positive (Strongly Agree/Agree), 47.1% were neutral, and 25.8% were negative (Disagree/Strongly Disagree). Because the questionnaire statements are negatively framed as constraints, high agreement indicates that respondents perceive the identified factors as important obstacles to NPF effectiveness.

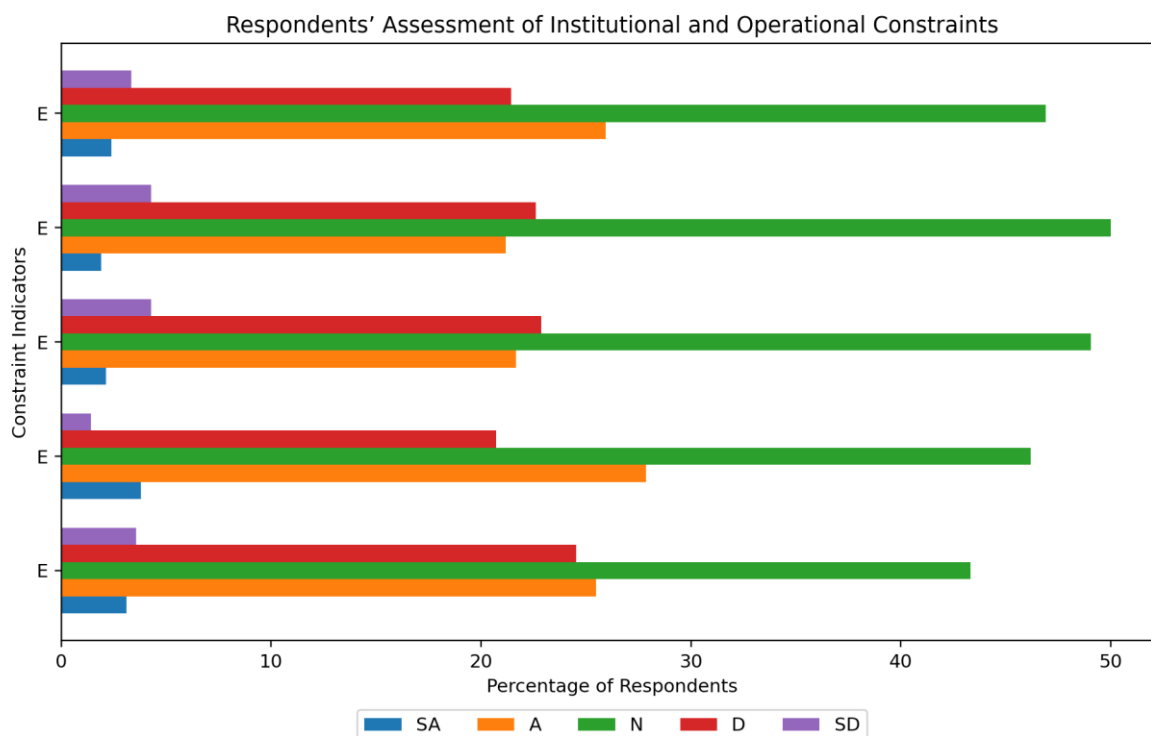


Figure 4.9: Horizontal Clustered Bar Chart of Institutional and Operational Constraints

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The chart presents the percentage distribution of the five response categories across E1–E5. The horizontal clustered format makes it possible to compare agreement and disagreement across the different constraints.



Item-by-Item Analysis

The interview findings provided practical explanations for the quantitative patterns. Participants identified personnel shortages, inadequate logistics, difficult access, community distrust and weak inter-agency coordination as factors affecting police operations.

Regarding personnel, INT02 noted that some police divisions lack sufficient officers to cover their geographical areas, while INT07 observed that available personnel may be inadequate when several incidents occur simultaneously. For funding and logistics, INT04 identified shortages of vehicles, fuel and communication equipment as obstacles to sustained deployment, while INT13 highlighted transportation difficulties in reaching distant communities.

Terrain and accessibility were also identified as operational challenges. INT05 and INT15 noted that poor roads, distance and seasonal conditions can delay access to conflict-prone locations. Regarding community distrust and perceived bias, INT08, INT11 and INT16 indicated that fears of partiality or unequal treatment may discourage information sharing and reporting.

Finally, inter-agency coordination emerged as an important constraint. INT03 and INT10 reported delays, gaps and duplication in information and security responses, while INT18 emphasised the value of local institutions as sources of early information. Overall, the interviews reinforce the quantitative finding that resource limitations and coordination weaknesses are central constraints on NPF effectiveness.

Integrated Analysis of Questionnaire and Interview Findings

The combined findings indicate that the constraints affecting NPF effectiveness are multidimensional and mutually reinforcing. While the questionnaire establishes their relative prominence, the interviews show how they interact in practical policing situations.

Personnel and logistical limitations can reduce police presence in conflict-prone areas, while poor accessibility may further delay deployment. At the community level, distrust and perceived bias can discourage information sharing and reporting, while weak coordination among security agencies may further limit the effective use of available information.

The findings therefore suggest that these constraints should not be addressed in isolation. Improving NPF effectiveness requires an integrated approach involving adequate personnel and logistics, improved access to remote communities, impartial and confidence-building policing, and stronger information-sharing and coordination mechanisms among security agencies and local stakeholders.

DISCUSSION OF FINDING

Objective One: To examine the institutional capacity and resources of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) for managing farmer–herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria.

The findings indicate that the availability of personnel, operational resources and institutional support strongly influences NPF capacity. Although the police are responsible for managing conflict, limitations in personnel, logistics, and operational capacity can restrict their presence and the sustainability of interventions across conflict-prone communities. This suggests that effective policing depends not only on the strategies adopted but also on the institutional capacity to implement them.

This finding is consistent with Vahyala (2021), who identified institutional capacity and cooperation with affected communities as important factors in managing farmer–herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria. The present study extends this position by showing that capacity involves more than numerical strength; personnel require adequate mobility, logistics and institutional support to translate policing strategies into meaningful security outcomes.



Objective Two: To examine the conflict-management strategies employed by the Nigeria Police Force in managing farmer–herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria

The findings show that the NPF employs a combination of preventive, responsive and community-oriented strategies, including patrols, intelligence gathering, rapid response and community engagement. This indicates that NPF conflict management is not exclusively reactive but also incorporates measures aimed at preventing escalation and maintaining security in affected communities.

The finding is consistent with Vahyala (2021), who identified dialogue, community participation, intelligence gathering and law-enforcement measures as important approaches to managing farmer–herder conflict. However, the present study suggests that these strategies are effective only with consistent implementation and community cooperation, particularly because intelligence-led policing and early intervention rely heavily on local information. A combination of timely response, prevention, dialogue and community engagement is therefore more appropriate for recurrent conflicts than predominantly incident-based intervention.

Objective Three: To assess the effectiveness of Nigeria Police Force interventions in managing farmer–herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria

The findings suggest that NPF interventions contribute to the containment of violence and protection of lives and property, but their effectiveness is not uniform across conflict-affected communities. Importantly, the qualitative evidence indicates that containing immediate violence does not necessarily eliminate the conditions that allow conflict to recur.

This finding is consistent with Vahyala (2021), who found that security interventions, including arrests, dialogue and community participation, can contribute to conflict de-escalation. The present study extends this understanding by arguing that police effectiveness should also be assessed through community confidence, perceived impartiality, sustained engagement and prevention of recurrence. Thus, while the NPF remains important for immediate security, sustainable outcomes require greater emphasis on continuous prevention, intelligence gathering and community engagement.

Objective Four: To identify the institutional and operational constraints affecting the effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force in managing farmer–herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria

The findings identify inadequate personnel, insufficient funding and logistics, difficult terrain, community distrust and perceived police bias, and weak inter-agency coordination as important constraints on NPF effectiveness. These challenges are interconnected: personnel shortages may reduce coverage, logistical limitations can restrict mobility, difficult terrain can delay intervention, while distrust may discourage communities from sharing information or cooperating with security personnel.

This finding is consistent with Ogbozor and Kemakolam (2026), who identified inadequate resources, institutional weaknesses and coordination challenges as constraints on security responses in North-Central Nigeria. The present study further demonstrates that these constraints can reinforce one another. Consequently, improving NPF effectiveness requires not only additional personnel but also adequate funding and logistics, improved accessibility, impartial policing, stronger community trust and effective inter-agency collaboration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following six recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthening Police Personnel Capacity:** The Nigeria Police Force should improve the recruitment, training and equitable deployment of personnel to farmer–herder conflict-prone areas. This would increase police presence and strengthen the capacity to respond to multiple incidents simultaneously.
2. **Improving Funding and Logistics:** Government should provide adequate and sustained funding for NPF operations, particularly patrol vehicles, fuel, communication equipment and other facilities required for policing rural and remote communities.



3. Strengthening Preventive and Community-Oriented Policing: The NPF should prioritise preventive policing through regular patrols, intelligence gathering, early intervention and sustained engagement with farmers, herders, traditional leaders and community representatives.
4. Building Community Trust and Police Impartiality: The NPF should strengthen community-engagement mechanisms and ensure that complaints involving farmers and herders are handled fairly and transparently. This would improve public confidence and encourage timely sharing of security information.
5. Improving Inter-Agency Coordination: The NPF should strengthen coordination and information sharing with other security agencies, traditional institutions, local government authorities and relevant community stakeholders. A coordinated security framework would enhance early warning and response to emerging conflicts.
6. Addressing Underlying Causes of Conflict: Police intervention should be complemented by broader government measures addressing underlying sources of farmer–herder conflict, particularly disputes over land, grazing areas, natural resources and livelihoods. The NPF should work with relevant government and community institutions to support long-term conflict prevention and sustainable peace.

CONCLUSION

This study assessed the perceived effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force in managing farmer–herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria. Rather than treating police deployment or intervention as evidence of effectiveness, the study assessed effectiveness through response promptness, incident containment and violence reduction, protection of lives and property, perceived impartiality and fairness, and community confidence in preventing recurrence.

The quantitative findings indicate a generally unfavourable assessment of NPF effectiveness, reflected in the overall mean score of 2.67. Nevertheless, respondents recognised that police presence and rapid intervention can contribute to the immediate containment of violence and protection of lives and property. The qualitative evidence similarly suggests that police intervention may restore temporary order during conflict incidents, although such containment does not necessarily eliminate the conditions that produce recurrence.

The study therefore distinguishes between short-term operational effectiveness and sustainable conflict-management effectiveness. The latter is influenced by institutional capacity, intelligence and early warning, community trust, impartiality, sustained engagement and coordination with other security and community actors. Institutional and operational constraints identified in the study including personnel shortages, inadequate logistics and funding, difficult terrain, limited accessibility, community distrust and perceived bias, and weak inter-agency coordination limit the NPF's capacity to translate policing strategies into sustained security outcomes.

Because the study relies substantially on stakeholder perceptions within a cross-sectional design, its findings should not be interpreted as establishing a causal effect of NPF interventions on changes in conflict incidence. Instead, the study provides an empirical assessment of how relevant stakeholders perceive police performance and the institutional conditions that shape it. The findings support a transition from predominantly reactive policing to preventive, intelligence-led, and community-oriented policing, complemented by stronger institutional capacity, impartial enforcement, sustained community engagement, and inter-agency coordination.

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