INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT, TRAUMA-RESILIENCE AND LOCUS OF CONTROL ON PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG VICTIMS OF FARMER-HERDER CONFLICT IN BENUE SOUTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

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Keywords

Psychological Adjustment, Social Support, Trauma-Resilience, Gender Difference

Abstract

Research Problem: *The recurring farmer-herder clashes in Benue South Senatorial District have inflicted profound psychological trauma upon victims, necessitating an investigation into the factors that facilitate emotional recovery. This study specifically addressed how social support, trauma-resilience, and locus of control influence the psychological adjustment of survivors within this conflict-ridden region.*

Methods/Theory: *Adopting a cross-sectional research design, the study sampled 384 victims aged 25 years and older from Agatu, Apa, Otukpo, and Oju Local Government Areas. The cohort included 217 males and 164 females. Data were gathered using four validated instruments: the Psychological Adjustment Scale, Social Support Scale, Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, and Nowicki-Duke Locus of Control Scale. Hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics, specifically simple regression, multiple regression, and t-test analysis.*

Results: *Findings revealed that social support (R=.589, R^2=.346), trauma-resilience (R=.408, R^2=.167), and locus of control (R=.549,*

R^2=.302) each significantly and independently predict psychological adjustment. Jointly, these three variables exert a significant collective influence on adjustment levels (R=.638, R^2=.408, p<.05). Furthermore, a significant gender difference was observed (t=8.192, p<.01), with males exhibiting higher psychological adjustment scores (X=19.82) compared to females (X=15.43).

Conclusion: *The study concludes that psychosocial resources, specifically robust social networks, internal strength, and a sense of personal agencyare critical determinants of mental health recovery for conflict victims. The significant disparity in adjustment scores highlights that women remain more psychologically vulnerable following these communal crises.*

Key Contribution to Knowledge: *This research provides empirical evidence of the interactive role of external support and internal psychological traits in post-conflict recovery within the Middle Belt. It establishes that gender-specific vulnerabilities must be factored into psychological interventions to ensure effective rehabilitation for all survivors.*

Recommendation: *Government agencies and humanitarian organizations should establish structured social support systems and trauma-resilience programs tailored to the specific needs of victims. Counseling should focus on enhancing victims' internal locus of control, and all mental health interventions must be gender-responsive to address the deeper trauma experienced by female survivors.*

Introduction

Violent communal conflicts such as farmer-herder disputes have continued to pose serious psychological challenges to affected populations across the world. Existing literature consistently shows that exposure to such conflicts is associated with increased cases of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and social dysfunction among victims (Bonanno, Romero & Klein, 2019).Beyond these outcomes, scholars have emphasized that recovery from trauma is not uniform, but largely influenced by certain psychosocial factors that shape how individuals interpret and respond to their experiences.

Among these factors, social support has been widely recognized as a critical resource that enhances emotional stability and facilitates recovery. Victims who maintain strong ties with family, friends, and community networks tend to report better psychological outcomes and lower levels of distress (Sippel et al., 2020). In a similar vein, trauma-resilience has been identified as a key personal resource that enables individuals to adapt positively despite exposure to severe adversity. Resilient individuals are more likely to regulate their emotions effectively and sustain a sense of hope even in difficult circumstances (Kalisch et al., 2019). Locus of control has also received considerable attention in the literature, with studies indicating that individuals who perceive greater personal

control over life events are more likely to engage in proactive coping strategies, while those with an external orientation often experience helplessness and psychological strain (Zhang et al., 2023).

While these studies have provided valuable insights into the role of psychosocial factors in trauma recovery, much of the existing literature has examined these variables either independently or within different socio-cultural contexts, with limited attention to their combined influence on psychological adjustment in conflict-affected communities. In addition, there is a need to better understand how these factors operate within specific local realities, particularly in regions that continue to experience recurrent farmer-herder conflicts. It is against this backdrop that the present study seeks to examine how social support, trauma-resilience, and locus of control interact to influence psychological adjustment among victims, thereby contributing to existing knowledge and extending empirical understanding within the Nigerian context.In recent years, many parts of Africa have seen a rise in violent clashes between farmers and herders, which have caused serious problems for the victims, such as being forced to leave their homes, losing their sources of income, and experiencing deep emotional trauma (Chikodili & Adebayo, 2024). Some key factors like social support, trauma-resilience, and how much control victims believe they have over their lives play an important role in how well they cope afterward (Akpan & Edet, 2020). In African communities, extended families, religious groups, and local associations often provide strong support, helping victims feel less alone and more emotionally stable (Oladeji & Ajayi, 2021). In places like East Africa, those who took part in healing activities, religious events, and traditional peace efforts were better at coping with the trauma (Mumbere & Tusiime, 2022).Resilience in African settings is often shaped by cultural traditions, spiritual beliefs, and ways of coping that have been passed down over time (Chikodili & Adebayo, 2024). In Southern Africa, traditional ceremonies, storytelling, and belief in ancestors help victims make sense of their suffering and feel stronger emotionally (Ibrahim & Musa, 2021). Victims who believe they have control over their recovery usually take active steps to heal and seek help, leading to better mental health (Okoye & Mutesi, 2025). On the other hand, those who believe that outside forces like fate or government neglect are to blame often feel hopeless and continue to suffer emotionally (Eze & Umeh, 2020).

In Nigeria, the ongoing farmer-herder conflict has caused significant loss of life, destruction of livelihoods, and widespread displacement, prompting growing concern about its psychological toll on victims (Udo & Bello, 2025). Key psychosocial factors such as social support, trauma-resilience, and locus of control play a major role in how victims cope and recover (Oyedele & Uzochukwu, 2023). Social support is especially vital in the Nigerian context, where extended families, religious institutions, and community networks are central to daily life. Victims with strong support systems have been found to experience fewer symptoms of depression and PTSD (Adegbite & Hassan, 2021; Oladele & Alabi, 2020). Religious gatherings and communal bonds also aid the healing of internally displaced persons in the Middle Belt (Akinyemi & Onuoha, 2021), offering emotional safety and a sense of belonging.Resilience in Nigeria is shaped by cultural traditions, spiritual beliefs, and communal practices. Victims in areas like Nasarawa and Kaduna often regain hope through religious faith, traditional healing, and collective

storytelling, which help them reconnect with community life and pursue personal development (Musa & Lawal, 2022). Resilience is also strengthened through shared practices such as group prayers, rebuilding efforts, and participation in cooperatives (Oyedele & Uzochukwu, 2023). In terms of locus of control, victims who believe in their ability to influence their recovery are more emotionally stable and proactive in resettlement and livelihood programs (Akinyemi & Onuoha, 2021). In contrast, those with an external locus who blame fate, government, or spiritual forcestend to experience helplessness, depression, and withdraw from recovery activities (Adegbite & Hassan, 2021).

Benue State, widely known as the "Food Basket of the Nation," has been severely affected by ongoing farmer-herder conflicts, resulting in mass displacement, loss of property, and psychological distress among its population (Igba & Tyokyaa, 2022). The psychological adjustment of victims in the state is influenced by several psychosocial factors, particularly social support, trauma-resilience, and locus of control, which are closely tied to the region's cultural, communal, and religious values (Aernan & Jirgba, 2025). The Benue South Senatorial District, especially agrarian communities such as Agatu, Otukpo, Ogbadibo, and Apa, remains a major hotspot of these violent clashes (Okibe & Idoko, 2024), with residents experiencing high levels of PTSD, depression, anxiety, and social fragmentation (Udo & Bello, 2025).

Existing studies have largely examined these psychosocial variables independently, emphasizing the protective role of community-based social support, cultural coping mechanisms, and individual belief systems in trauma recovery. For instance, community and religious networks have been shown to reduce depressive symptoms and promote reintegration (Ochayi & Abah, 2021), while cultural practices such as storytelling and communal rebuilding strengthen resilience (Ode & Aluya, 2022). Similarly, locus of control has been linked to recovery outcomes, with internally oriented individuals demonstrating more proactive coping behaviours (Ameh & Ochefu, 2020).

However, despite these insights, there remains a significant gap in the literature. Most previous studies have not sufficiently examined the combined and interactive influence of social support, trauma-resilience, and locus of control on psychological adjustment, particularly within the specific socio-cultural context of Benue South Senatorial District. In addition, limited attention has been given to how these psychosocial factors operate differently across gender, especially in conflict-affected rural communities where cultural expectations strongly shape coping behaviours.

Gender plays a critical role in shaping how victims experience and respond to trauma. Women often report higher levels of anxiety and depression due to their dual roles as victims and caregivers, while men tend to exhibit suppressed emotional responses and maladaptive coping strategies such as withdrawal and substance use (Ejembi & Onah, 2020; Ameh & Ochefu, 2020). Furthermore, differences in locus of control and access to support systems further deepen these gendered patterns of adjustment.

Against this backdrop, this study adopts a more integrative and context-specific approach by examining the joint influence of social support, trauma-resilience, and locus of control on psychological adjustment, while also incorporating gender differences as a critical moderating factor. By focusing specifically on victims in Benue South Senatorial District, this

study seeks to move beyond generalized findings and provide empirically grounded insights that reflect the lived realities of conflict-affected communities in the region.

Thus, the study not only addresses existing gaps in the literature but also sets the foundation for a more comprehensive understanding of psychological adjustment in conflict settings, with implications for culturally relevant and gender-responsive interventions.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the increasing incidence of farmer-herder conflict in Benue South Senatorial District, many victims continue to experience poor psychological adjustment, with limited understanding of the psychosocial factors influencing their recovery. The farmer-herder conflict in the area has caused deep psychological trauma among victims, including long-term anxiety, emotional distress, and social withdrawal. Poor psychological adjustment is often linked to the lack of social support, especially among displaced individuals without strong family, community, or religious ties (Ejembi & Onah, 2020; Terwase & Aboh, 2021).

Many victims also lack trauma-resilience, particularly those not engaged in traditional healing practices such as storytelling, spiritual rituals, or communal activities, making them more vulnerable to chronic stress (Igba & Tyokyaa, 2022). Furthermore, victims with an external locus of control, who believe recovery depends on fate, divine will, or government intervention, tend to be passive and emotionally unstable. In contrast, those with an internal locus of control show greater motivation to seek help, rebuild their lives, and recover more effectively (Ameh & Ochefu, 2020).

Gender differences also play a significant role in how victims cope with trauma. Women, especially widows and caretakers, often report higher levels of anxiety and depression, with coping strategies largely rooted in social and religious networks such as women's fellowships and support groups. In contrast, men are more likely to display emotional withdrawal, aggression, or substance use as coping strategies, yet are less likely to seek psychological help due to prevailing cultural norms (Ameh & Ochefu, 2020).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study examined the influence of social support, trauma-resilience and locus of control on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South Senatorial District. The specific objectives were to:

i. examine the individual and joint influence of perceived social support, trauma-resilience, and locus of control on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South Senatorial District.

ii. investigate gender differences in psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South Senatorial District.

Research Questions

The study was guided by two research questions.

i. What is the extent to which social support, trauma-resilience and locus of control influence psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South Senatorial District?

ii. What is the extent to which gender differences influence psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South Senatorial District?

Literature Review

Psychological Adjustment

According to Salah and Iman (2022), psychological adjustment is the set of behaviors that an individual adopts to achieve their goals, and it appears in harmony and achieving stability with oneself first and, another second. To Smith and Doe (2020) psychological adjustment refers to an individual's ability to cope with and adapt to the various challenges, changes, and stressors encountered in life. This adjustment is influenced by factors such as personality, environment, social support, and life experiences. Psychological adjustment involves a process where one modifies their behavior to achieve harmony with oneself, others, or the environment, aiming to maintain equilibrium between the individual and their surroundings (Smith & Hollinger-Smith, 2020). Similarly, Okonkwo and Eze (2022) conceptualized psychological adjustment as the cognitive and emotional reorganization individuals undergo following traumatic experiences such as loss, displacement, or violence. Individuals who are able to reinterpret stressful events in a constructive manner and access emotional support tend to experience better psychological outcomes.

Social Support

Social support refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of the availability and quality of support they receive from their social network, including family, friends, and significant others. It encompasses both the emotional and practical assistance one believes is accessible when needed (Nannanet al., 2024). Social support refers to an individual's subjective belief in the availability and reliability of support from family, friends, and significant others in their life. It is the confidence that one will receive emotional, practical, and social support from their social network when needed (Jin et al., 2022). Social support is defined as the availability of people who make one feel cared about, valued, and loved. Having social relationships with others is a basic human need and is important for a healthy development, as early relational experiences affect and form the quality of and expectations in later social relationships (Andalibi et al., 2018). Social support is generally defined as the “extent to which an individual believes that his or her needs for support, information, and feedback are fulfilled (Weismayer, 2020).

Trauma-Resilience

According to the American Psychological Association (APA, 2020), psychological trauma-resilience is defined as the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences. It also refers to the ability to withstand, recover, or adapt positively to traumatic experiences, incorporating psychological, emotional, and social resilience mechanisms.To **Luthar and Eisenberg** (2022), trauma-resilience refers to an individual's capacity to withstand, adapt to, and recover from traumatic experiences. This concept encompasses the ability to maintain or regain mental health and well-being despite experiencing significant stress or adversity. Trauma-resilience is influenced by various factors, including personality traits, coping mechanisms, social support, and environmental contexts (**Folkman & Greer,** 2020).

Locus of Control

Locus of control is a foundational psychological concept that describes the degree to which individuals believe they have control over the outcomes of events in their lives. Akhtar and Kroener-Herwig (2019) define locus of control as a generalized belief about the causes of life events, distinguishing between internal and external orientations. An internal locus refers to the perception that personal actions determine outcomes, while an external locus suggests that outcomes are governed by external factors such as fate, chance, or powerful others. Mahdi, Hamid, and Yusuf (2020) describe locus of control as a psychological orientation reflecting how individuals perceive their capacity to influence life circumstances. An internal orientation reflects a belief in personal responsibility and effort as key to success, whereas an external orientation implies dependence on situational or environmental factors beyond one's control.

Social Support and Psychological Adjustment among Victims of Farmer-HerderConflict

Social support is acknowledged as a key psychological factor that promotes emotional stability and adaptive functioning among victims exposed to traumatic events. This perception plays a crucial role in shaping the way victims interpret and cope with stress, loss, and instability caused by violent conflict and displacement (Miller & Mason, 2019).According to Okolie and Ibrahim (2019), the mere perception of being cared for or understood helps to reduce emotional distress, encourages positive thinking, and promotes a sense of belonging, which are essential for psychological adjustment. Victims who feel emotionally connected are less likely to feel isolated or overwhelmed, and this sense of connection facilitates coping and emotional healing.Lawal and Ogunyemi (2020) noted that the role of perceived social support is particularly significant among victims of farmer-herder conflict, many of whom have witnessed loss of life, destruction of homes, and displacement from ancestral lands. In such contexts, perceived support serves as a stabilizing psychological mechanism that buffers against the negative effects of trauma. Iorfa, Idoko and Adekoya (2023) explained that perceived social support fosters psychological adjustment by empowering individuals to reinterpret their experiences in ways that preserve hope and purpose. The psychological reassurance that someone is willing to listen, assist, or simply remain present through hardship reduces the likelihood of chronic stress responses such as depression or trauma-related disorders.

Trauma-resilience and Psychological Adjustment among Victims of Farmer-Herder Conflict

The farmer-herder conflict characterized by killings, displacement, destruction of farmlands and communal hostilities presents a significant threat to victims' psychological health. Many survivors experience trauma-related symptoms such as fear, grief, anxiety and post-traumatic stress. However, trauma-resilience enables individuals to buffer the emotional damage caused by such stressors (Miller & Daniels, 2019). According to Ibrahim and Edoh (2023), resilience does not eliminate distress but provides in victims with the psychological tools to confront and manage it effectively. Victims with higher levels of resilience are better able to reframe their experiences, regulate emotions, and sustain a sense of purpose and hope. According to Okafor and Yakubu (2020), resilience does not eliminate distress but provides individuals with the psychological

tools to confront and manage it effectively. Victims with higher levels of resilience are better able to reframe their experiences, regulate emotions and sustain a sense of purpose and hope. The farmer-herder conflict, characterized by killings, displacement, destruction of farmlands, and communal hostilities, presents a significant threat to victims' psychological health. Many survivors experience trauma-related symptoms such as fear, grief, anxiety and post-traumatic stress. Adejoh and Chukwu (2022) emphasized that trauma-resilience is nurtured through cultural identity, spiritual beliefs, and communal coping traditions. These external influences reinforce internal strength by giving meaning to suffering, offering pathways for forgiveness, and promoting collective healing. As a result, victims who embrace culturally grounded forms of resilience are more likely to achieve psychological adjustment even in contexts of prolonged trauma. However, trauma-resilience enables victims to buffer the emotional damage caused by such stressors.

Locus of Control and Psychological Adjustment among Victims of Farmer-Herder Conflict

Locus of control significantly influences the psychological adjustment of victims of conflicts where repeated violence, displacement and loss of livelihoods have left many in prolonged distress. According to Eze and Ugwuanyi (2023), these victims engage more actively in seeking shelter, rebuilding their lives, or accessing available support services. Such a belief in personal control strengthens coping strategies and enhances emotional resilience. These victims are more likely to experience hope, perseverance, and reduced symptoms of psychological disorders such as depression and post-traumatic stress.In contrast, victims who operate under an external locus of control often attribute their suffering and survival to fate, divine will, government failure, or other external agents. Bello and Salami (2022) observed that many displaced victims of communal violence in North-Central Nigeria, including those affected by the farmer-herder crisis, reported feeling powerless to change their conditions. Such perceptions led to chronic stress, emotional numbness, and a higher risk of mental health deterioration. These victims frequently withdrew from community activities, depended passively on aid and expressed hopelessness regarding their future.

Social support, trauma-resilience and locus of controlon psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict

According to Miller and Mason (2019), support helps to reduce the psychological burden of traumatic events by fostering a sense of safety, connection, and belonging. For victims of the farmer-herder conflict, such support may come from family members, religious groups, community leaders, or humanitarian organizations. When victims perceive themselves as supported, they are more likely to engage in adaptive coping strategies and less likely to experience chronic emotional dysfunction. Okafor and Yakubu (2020) asserted that trauma-resilience empowers victims to manage distress, reinterpret negative experiences, and maintain psychological stability. In the context of the farmer-herder conflict, resilience enables victims to accept losses, develop meaning from their suffering, and begin the process of emotional recovery. Both trauma-resilience and social support function interactively. Ibeagha and Okonkwo (2021) noted that educational level and access to information also influence locus of control. Victims with more exposure to education or civic engagement programs are more likely to understand rights, options, and available support

systems. As such, they develop stronger internal orientations, seeing themselves as active participants in their recovery process. Uzoho and Chukwuemeka (2023) explain that female victims, especially widows or single mothers, often adopt external control beliefs due to cultural constraints, reduced economic opportunities, and limited decision-making power. As a result, psychological recovery becomes more difficult, with many relying solely on humanitarian intervention. Male victims, on the other hand, are more likely to retain internal control beliefs, particularly where cultural expectations position them as family protectors and providers. These men, despite their losses, often strive to regain control by engaging in farming, trade, or leadership within displacement camps.

Gender Differences and Psychological Adjustment among Victims of Farmer-Herder Conflict

Gender differences significantly influences how victims psychologically respond to and recover from traumatic experiences such as the farmer-herder conflict in Benue South Senatorial District. According to Ejembi and Onah (2020), female victims in Agatu and Otukpo reported higher levels of anxiety, depression, and trauma-related symptoms compared to male victims. This was attributed to the dual trauma women experience both as direct victims of violence and as caretakers of affected victims. More so, Ameh and Ochefu (2020) found that men displayed signs of emotional withdrawal, aggression and substance use as coping strategies. However, due to cultural norms, they were less likely to seek psychological help, resulting in unaddressed trauma and maladaptive behaviors. Furthermore, Iduh and Ejeh (2023)pointed out that coping strategies differ significantly between genders. While women in Benue South tend to rely on social and religious support networks such as church women's fellowships and widow support groups, men are more inclined to seek financial or political empowerment avenues for recovery. Gender also influences how victims perceive control over their situations.

Hypotheses

The study was guided by five research hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Social support will have a significant influence on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South senatorial district.
2. Trauma-resilience will have a significant influence on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South senatorial district.
3. Locus of control will have a significant influence on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South senatorial district.
4. There will be a significant joint influence of social support, trauma-resilience and locus of control on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South senatorial district.
5. There will be a significant gender difference on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South Senatorial District.

Method

Design

The study adopted the cross-sectional research design to assess the influence of social support and trauma-resilience and locus of control on psychological adjustment among victims of the farmer-herder conflict in Benue-

South, Nigeria. The study was conducted in Benue-South Senatorial District.

Participants

The participants in this study were 384 victims of the farmer-herders conflict in the Benue-South Senatorial District selected from four Local Government Areas namely; Agatu, Apa, Otukpo, and Oju in Benue State. Their ages ranged from 25-44 years and above. This was made up of 217 males and 164 females.

Instrument

To collect data for the study, the researcher utilized standardized and validated questionnaires using psychological adjustment scale developed by Cruz et al. (2019), Social Support Scale developed by Procidano and Heller (1983), Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale developed by Connor and Davidson (2003) and Nowicki-Duke Locus of Control Scale (1974). The participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses in the questionnaire and that; the exercise was purely for research purpose only.

Data Analysis

The data for this study were analyzed using inferential statistics. Inferential statistics involving simple, multiple regression and t-test analysis were used in testing the hypotheses.

Results

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: This hypothesis states that, social support will have a significant influence on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South senatorial district. This hypothesis was tested and the result tabulated below.

Table 1: Summary of Scores from Multiple Regression Analysis for Influence of Social Support on Psychological Adjustment among Victims of Farmer-herder Conflict in Benue-South Senatorial District

Variables	R	R^2	F	Df	β	t	Sig
Constant	.589	.346	80.630	3, 378		7.994	.000
Family					.453	4.315	.010
Friends					.220	3.991	.021
Significant Others					.379	2.151	.032

The results in table 1 indicate that social support significantly predicts psychological adjustment among victims of the farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South Senatorial District [R=.589, R^2=.346, F(3, 378)= 80. 630; p<.05]. With this result, the hypothesis was confirmed, meaning social support significantly influences psychological adjustment among victims of the farmer-herder conflict.

Hypothesis 2: This hypothesis states that, traumatic resilience will have a significant influence on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South senatorial district. This hypothesis was tested and the result tabulated below.

Table 2: Summary of Scores from Regression Analysis for Influence of Traumatic-resilience on Psychological Adjustment among Victims of Farmer-herder Conflict in Benue-South Senatorial District

Predictor (s)	R	R^2	F	Df	β	t	Sig
Constant	.408	.167	76.513	1, 380		32.369	.000
Traumatic-resilience					.408	8.747	.011

The results in table 2reveals that trauma-resilience has significant influence on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South senatorial district [R=.408, R^2=.167, F(1, 380)=76.513; p<.01]. With this result, the hypothesis was confirmed, meaning trauma-resilience significantly influences psychological adjustment among victims of the farmer-herder conflict.

Hypothesis 3: This hypothesis states that, locus of control will have a significant influence on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South senatorial district.

Table 3: Summary of Standard Multiple Linear Regression Showing influence of Locus of Control on Psychological Adjustment among Victims of Farmer-herder Conflict in Benue-South senatorial district

Predictor (s)	R	R^2	F	Df	β	t	Sig
Constant	.549	.302	75.149	2, 379		22.118	.000
Internal LoC					.459	7.460	.021
External LoC					-.751	12.196	.000

Table 3 above reveals that locus of control significantly predicts psychological adjustment among victims of the farmer-herder conflictin Benue-South senatorial district [R=.549, R^2=.302, F(2, 379)=75.149, p<.05].When examined independently, internal locus of control had a positive and significant influence on psychological adjustment with a standardized regression coefficient (β = 0.459), a t-value of 7.460 and a significance level of p = 0.021 while external locus of control had a negative and significant influence on psychological adjustment (β = -0.751, t = 12.196, p = 0.000). With this result, the hypothesis was confirmed, meaning locus of control significantly influences psychological adjustment among victims of the farmer-herder conflict.

Hypothesis 4: This hypothesis states that, there will be a significant joint influence of social support, trauma-resilience and locus of control on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South senatorial district.

Table 4: Summary of Multiple Linear Regression Showing Joint Influence of Social Support, Trauma-resilience and Locus of Control on Psychological Adjustment among Victims of Farmer-herder Conflict in Benue-South Senatorial District

Predictor (s)	R	R^2	F	Df	β	t	Sig
Constant	.638	.408	87.171	3, 378		6.161	.000
Social Support					.565	11.734	.010
Locus of Control					.209	7.847	.020
Trauma-resilience					.228	5.719	.011

Table 4 above reveals that social support, trauma-resilience and locus of control jointly have a significant influence on psychological adjustment among victims of the farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South senatorial district [R=.638, R2=.408, F(3, 378)= 87.171; p<.05].When examined independently, all three variables social support, locus of control, and trauma-resilience were found to significantly predict psychological adjustment. Social support had standardized regression coefficient (β = 0.565), a t-value of 11.734 and a significance level of p = .010 indicating that it is the strong individual predictor of psychological adjustment. With this result, the hypothesis was confirmed, meaning social support, trauma-resilience and locus of control jointly have a significant influence on psychological adjustment among victims of the farmer-herder conflict.

Hypothesis 5: This hypothesis states that, there will be a significant sex difference on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South Senatorial District.

Table 5: T-test Summary Showing significant sex difference on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South Senatorial District

Sex	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	Sig
Male	217	19.8249	3.63709			
				367	8.192	<.01
Female	152	15.4276	6.60885			

Table 5 above reveals that there was a significant sex difference in psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South Senatorial District [t(1, 367)=8.192; p<.01] such that males (X=19.8249, SD=3.63709) appear to be higher in psychological adjustment than females (X=15.4276, SD=6.60885) respectively. With this result, the hypothesis was confirmed, meaning there is a significant sex difference in psychological adjustment among victims of the farmer-herder conflict.

Discussions

The study was aimed at assessing the influence of social support and trauma-resilience on psychological adjustment among victims of the farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South senatorial district. Five hypotheses were formulated and the result analyzed and presented.

Hypothesis one states that social support will have a significant influence on psychological adjustment among victims of the farmer-herder conflict in the Benue-South senatorial district. The result revealed that there was significant influence of social support on psychological adjustment among victims of the farmer-herder conflict. This finding corroborates that of Miller and Mason (2019) which maintained that perceived social support has been widely acknowledged as a key psychological factor that promotes emotional stability and adaptive functioning among victims exposed to traumatic events such as the farmer-herder conflict. This perception plays a crucial role in shaping the way victims interpret and cope with stress, loss, and instability caused by violent conflict and displacement. The result also supports that ofLawal and Ogunyemi (2020) maintaining that the role of perceived social support is particularly significant among victims of farmer-herder conflict, many of whom have witnessed loss of life, destruction of homes, and displacement from ancestral lands. In such contexts, perceived support serves as a stabilizing psychological mechanism that buffers against the negative effects of trauma. It helps victims to reinterpret their experiences more constructively and develop hope for recovery and reintegration. This finding also aligns with that of Iorfa, Idoko and Adekoya (2023) explaining that perceived social support fosters psychological adjustment by empowering individuals to reinterpret their experiences in ways that preserve hope and purpose. The psychological reassurance that someone is willing to listen, assist, or simply remain present through hardship reduces the likelihood of chronic stress responses such as depression or trauma-related disorders.

Hypothesis two states that traumatic resilience will have a significant influence on psychological adjustment among victims of the farmer-herder conflict in the Benue-South senatorial district. The result revealed that there was significant influence of traumatic resilience on psychological adjustment among victims of

the farmer-herder conflict. This finding is consistent with that of Ibrahim and Edoh (2023) who highlighted that resilience does not eliminate distress but provides in victims with the psychological tools to confront and manage it effectively. Victims with higher levels of resilience are better able to reframe their experiences, regulate emotions, and sustain a sense of purpose and hope. The finding also agrees with that of Okafor and Yakubu (2020) who revealed that resilience does not eliminate distress but provides victims with the psychological tools to confront and manage it effectively. Victims with higher levels of resilience are better able to reframe their experiences, regulate emotions, and sustain a sense of purpose and hope. The farmer-herder conflict, characterized by killings, displacement, destruction of farmlands and communal hostilities, presents a significant threat to victims' psychological health. Many survivors experience trauma-related symptoms such as fear, grief, anxiety and post-traumatic stress.Similarly, the finding aligns with that of Adejoh and Chukwu (2022) emphasizing that trauma-resilience is nurtured through cultural identity, spiritual beliefs, and communal coping traditions. These external influences reinforce internal strength by giving meaning to suffering, offering pathways for forgiveness, and promoting collective healing. As a result, victims who embrace culturally grounded forms of resilience are more likely to achieve psychological adjustment even in contexts of prolonged trauma.

Hypothesis three states that locus of control will have a significant influence on psychological adjustment among victims of the farmer-herder conflict in the Benue-South senatorial district. The result revealed that there was significant influence of locus of control on psychological adjustment among victims of the farmer-herder conflict. This finding also aligns with Eze and Ugwuanyi (2023) stressing that locus of control significantly influences the psychological adjustment of victims of the farmer-herder conflict, especially in areas like Benue State, where repeated violence, displacement, and loss of livelihoods have left many in prolonged distress. These victims engage more actively in seeking shelter, rebuilding their lives, or accessing available support services. Such a belief in personal control strengthens coping strategies and enhances emotional resilience. These victims are more likely to experience hope, perseverance, and reduced symptoms of psychological disorders such as depression and post-traumatic stress.This finding also supports that of Okoye and Mutesi (2025) emphasizing that victims of farmer-herder conflicts who believe they have control over their recovery usually take active steps to heal and seek help, leading to better mental health. On the other hand, those who believe that outside forces like fate or government neglect are to blame often feel hopeless and continue to suffer emotionally.

Hypothesis four states that there will be a significant joint influence of social support, trauma-resilience and locus of control on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South senatorial district. The result revealed that social support and trauma-resilience jointly have significant influence on psychological adjustment among victims of the farmer-herder conflict. This finding aligns with that of Miller and Mason (2019), stating that perceived support helps to reduce the psychological burden of traumatic events by fostering a sense of safety, connection, and belonging. For victims of the farmer-herder conflict, such support may come from family members, religious groups, community leaders, or humanitarian organizations. This network of

support promotes emotional regulation, reduces feelings of helplessness, and fosters hope each of which is essential for psychological adjustment. This finding also supports the study of Okafor and Yakubu (2020) asserting that trauma-resilience empowers victims to manage distress, reinterpret negative experiences, and maintain psychological stability. In the context of the farmer-herder conflict, resilience enables victims to accept losses, develop meaning from their suffering, and begin the process of emotional recovery. Victims who perceive strong social support are often more resilient, as supportive relationships can reinforce self-efficacy and optimism. Conversely, resilient individuals are more likely to seek out and sustain supportive networks, further enhancing their capacity to adjust. This interplay strengthens the psychological foundation needed to overcome trauma. This finding also aligns with Eze and Ugwuanyi (2023) stressing that locus of control significantly influences the psychological adjustment of victims of the farmer-herder conflict, especially in areas like Benue State, where repeated violence, displacement, and loss of livelihoods have left many in prolonged distress. These victims engage more actively in seeking shelter, rebuilding their lives, or accessing available support services. Such a belief in personal control strengthens coping strategies and enhances emotional resilience. These victims are more likely to experience hope, perseverance, and reduced symptoms of psychological disorders such as depression and post-traumatic stress.

Hypothesis five states that there will be a significant sex difference on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South Senatorial District. The result revealed thatthere was significant sex difference on psychological adjustment among victims of farmer-herder conflict. This finding is in accordance with Ejembi and Onah (2020) maintaining that female victims in Agatu and Otukpo reported higher levels of anxiety, depression, and trauma-related symptoms compared to male victims. This was attributed to the dual trauma women experience both as direct victims of violence and as caretakers of affected victims. More so, the finding is in line with Ameh and Ochefu (2020) who found that men displayed signs of emotional withdrawal, aggression and substance use as coping strategies. However, due to cultural norms, they were less likely to seek psychological help, resulting in unaddressed trauma and maladaptive behaviors. Furthermore, the finding collaborates with Iduh and Ejeh (2023)pointing out that coping strategies differ significantly between genders. While women in Benue South tend to rely on social and religious support networks such as church women's fellowships and widow support groups, men are more inclined to seek financial or political empowerment avenues for recovery. Gender also influences how victims perceive control over their situations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has shown that social support, trauma-resilience, locus of control and gender difference play a significant role in shaping the psychological adjustment of victims of the farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South Senatorial District. Conceptually, the findings reinforce the understanding that psychological adjustment in conflict settings is not determined by a single factor, but by an interaction of social, cognitive and emotional processes. The strong influence of social support highlights the importance of relational and community-based coping, while trauma-resilience emphasizes the role of inner strength and adaptive capacity in navigating distress. Similarly, locus of control explains how individuals' beliefs about control

over their lives can either strengthen or weaken their recovery process.

Theoretically, the findings are consistent with existing studies which emphasize that individuals with strong social support systems and higher resilience tend to experience better psychological outcomes after traumatic events. The result also aligns with earlier research that links internal locus of control with proactive coping and improved adjustment. However, this study further extends previous works by showing the combined influence of these variables within the specific context of farmer-herder conflict in Benue-South, as well as highlighting the role of gender differences in shaping adjustment outcomes.

In line with these findings, it is recommended that government agencies, humanitarian bodies and community leaders work together to provide structured and accessible social support systems for victims. Mental health and recovery stakeholders should also design and implement trauma-resilience programmes that reflect the lived experiences and cultural realities of affected communities. In addition, psychological counselling services should be strengthened to help victims develop a stronger sense of personal control and direction in their recovery journey. There is also a need for a coordinated and holistic approach that addresses social support, resilience and locus of control together rather than in isolation. Finally, all interventions should be gender-sensitive, taking into account the different ways men and women experience and respond to trauma.

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