

The Struggle for Space and Conflict of Interests between Human and Animals for Rights and Welfare in Nigeria - A Case Study

Mary Ann. O. Ajayi¹, Olufemi Alabi^{2,*}

¹College of Law, Bowen University, Nigeria

²Agriculture Programme, College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science, Bowen University, Nigeria

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Abstract Over the years, humans and animals have coexisted with minimal infractions on both rights. However, the quest for survival which has been triggered by economic, cultural, religious, and security issues has contributed to persistent conflicts for human survival which grossly affects human/animal welfare/rights. Conflict can be said to occur between the relationships of humans and animals when there is a struggle for space and survival. Evidence abounds of the constant encroachment of humans on the space previously occupied by animals. Human activities such as deforestation, deliberate wildlife captivity, and indiscriminate removal of animals for the benefit of human needs, trigger encroachment of animal space by humans. The removal of these animals from their natural environment no doubt affects welfare/rights protected by law. The utilitarian theory was adopted in this paper to explain the importance of animal welfare/rights. This work investigated human/animal conflicts using Akure-Ofosu Forest Reserve as a case study. It found among other things that factors such as poverty, increase in the human population, and lack of education/enlightenment about the benefits of the presence of some animals are the main push for human encroachment on animal space. The study reveals that the issue of animal rights is still unpopular in Nigeria and similarly, the enforcement of laws pertaining to these

rights is also lacking. It therefore recommends that issues of peaceful co-existence of humans and animals be addressed urgently by Government and NGOs to reduce conflicts. Human and animal interactions are inevitable hence, cannot be devoid of conflict; therefore, efforts made at resolving these conflicts should protect both interests. Future UN SDGs goals should capture animal welfare issues considering their importance in sustaining other goals.

Keywords Animal Rights, Animal Welfare, Conflict, Conservation, Human Rights

1. Introduction

In recent times, humans and animals interact in diverse ways and various capacities beyond the usual provision for food, companionship, and therapy providers [1]. These interactions are inevitable as humans serve as caretakers which play a significant role in the general welfare of both the animals and their stewards (humans). Close encounters with wildlife have been documented to acknowledge that humans have from earliest years interacted with animals. People interacting with nature are depicted in early cave paintings from around the world [2]. Reports have shown

that human-animal interaction could be mutualistic [3]; however, there is a dearth of information in this area of study despite the co-existence of humans and animals for several years. Irrespective of the beneficial advantages of human and animal relationships, not all interactions are positive as some animal species are not suitable for close contact with humans [4]. Humans are traditionally known to cohabit with domestic animals while wild animals are left in their natural environment; however, the trend of keeping wild animals in their natural environment is fast declining. Some animals are deliberately removed and kept in human captivity for personal gains, such as pet ownership and show of affluence.

The welfare of some animals, particularly animals that ought to be raised in the wild, cannot be guaranteed outside their natural environment for this co-existence could affect the welfare of these animals and vice versa. The relationship between humans and animals is not devoid of conflict, and this occurs when the needs and behavior of animals negatively affect humans or when human needs negatively affect animals. Humans are clothed with rights and animals have laws protecting their welfare, though, it's been argued by scholars that animals do not have rights but in reality, animals could be said to derive their rights from the protection accorded to them by law. Animal welfare deals with the relationship humans have with animals and the responsibility of humans to ensure that animals within their care are treated responsibly bearing in mind that animals also feel pain just like humans. The welfare of animals is protected in the use of animals for research, regulation for animal research is found in many countries across the globe, particularly in Western countries, and this practice has been gradually imbibed in Nigeria.

The struggle for space and conflict of interests becomes imperative for studies by researchers because of the unavoidable interactions that exist between humans and animals and consequences involved.

Humans invade animal territory for many reasons through, excessive logging, poaching, illegal smuggling of animals, and deliberate captivity. In the like manner, animals particularly wild animals have strayed into human territories and have been brutally murdered or subjected to various forms of depravity, not bearing in mind their welfare. This paper examines human/ animal relationships, animal welfare, the benefits of their interactions, and the possible reasons for the persistent conflicts. This is examined to posit a solution for the peaceful co-existence of humans and animals taking into consideration their rights. It is important as the first step in this paper to discuss animal welfare to establish a justification for animal welfare. The reason for this is being that animal welfare issues are not dedicated significant attention in legal scholarship in Nigeria when compared to what obtains in other climes[5], has argued that despite the plethora of legislation protecting animal welfare in Nigeria, success is far from being achieved in protecting animal welfare, particularly those of endangered species in the

wild. She identifies *inter alia* ignorance of the law, poverty, lack of zeal to prosecute offenders, poverty as some of the issues behind considering animal issues as unimportant. In Nigeria for example, only domestic animals have their welfare guaranteed. Alabi [6] has argued in his study that researchers, producers, consumers, and governments all need to pay close attention to the important global topic of animal welfare.

The term animal welfare is being used interchangeably by different disciplines and could possess multiple definitions by different people [7]. Scholars on animal rights have over the years framed animal rights as moral rights; however, there is a recent clamour that these rights be legally institutionalized and reconstructed to become legal rights [8]. There have also been arguments for animals to have corresponding legal rights just like rights ascribed to humans [9]. Stucki [10] has argued that the underlying reason for the transformation of animals' moral rights existed without any legal validation over the years, this deprived animals of sufficient practical protection. Where animal laws are given legal validation the law also provides animal rights violators with stringent enforcement mechanisms and protection. Stucki [10] posits further that given the potential justification of animal rights, it would be appropriate to transfer moral rights to the legal domain.

Hohfeld [11] explains the formal theory of rights through his Hohfeldian typology of rights. He posits that the generic meaning of rights has been used indiscriminately when referring to any legal advantage. He identifies four different concepts of rights which are: claims-these are rights in their strict scenes, liberties, powers, and immunities. Stucki [12] has argued that animal rights activities hinge their belief that animals have rights on the concept of "claim" which is a right in its strict sense. He believes that a right in the strict sense means "to claim something and against someone". This is a corresponding obligation of both the beneficiary of the right and the holder of the right to do or refrain from doing something. He describes the relationship of humans to the state as an obligation to perform certain actions and a corresponding duty of the state not to also perform certain actions. Animals derive their rights from the negative rights granted to humans not to interfere with certain issues concerning animals and to provide good service to animals. Stucki, in justification that animals derive their rights under the claim, states: "granting animals claim rights would put them in a merely passive position determined by the presence of humans and their fulfillment of their obligations to them. It would not be necessary for the animals to take any action" [12].

Scholars of divergent opinions have argued that the concept of claim, which means rights *stricto sensu* cannot be ascribed to animals given the fact that animals are constantly and inevitably in a state of "no duty". Animals cannot bear legal duties hence they cannot have a legal claim (rights) against other animals because other animals do not have the capacity of possessing correlative duties.

Rights according to Hohfeld [13], demand a duty to perform or refrain from performing certain activities. Animals have natural liberty that is protected against interferences by others, for example, freedom of movement. Right is an interest recognized and protected by law, respect which is a duty, and disrespect which is wrong. Respect is an obligation, while disrespect is wrong, rights are obligations protected and guaranteed by the law.

Animal rights are a product of the combination of rights granted to animals by the state as a result of the interest the state has in them. There are also legal limitations imposed on people in their contacts or dealings with animals and these are what animal rights are all about [14]. Albert Schweitzer, pioneer of the philosophy of “respect for life” has also campaigned for living beings to be saved from this misery and have much of their pain alleviated, thus we must do everything in our power to help them (animals) [15].

The Farm Animal Welfare Council in Britain presented a different ethical view concerning animal welfare. Animal welfare is said to include the mental and physical state of an animal. An animal kept by man should not be deliberately subjected to suffering. Animals are clothed with five freedoms which are freedoms from hunger, discomfort, pain, injury, or disease, expressing normal behavior, fear, and distress. Rollins posits that for several decades of human existence, the anti-cruelty ethic was the only “socially articulated moral principle” for animal treatment [16].

The concept of animal rights has also been subjected to criticisms such scholars have opined that the spread of advocacy for animal welfare jeopardizes human dignity as moral beings that live in judgment of one another and of themselves. However, amid these arguments, advocacy for animal rights took another dimension in 1977 when the Bill of Animal Rights was sponsored by the International League of Animal Rights and Affiliated National Leagues in the course of the International Meeting on Animal Rights. This formed the first international legal order which served as a platform for the application of ethical issues on animal rights involving consideration of the moral responsibility of humans to non-humans in the context of the Rights of animals. The consequence of this first legal order heralded the Universal Declaration on Animal Rights by UNESCO.

The Declaration for Animal Rights has a robust package for the protection of animal welfare. Besides legislative interventions, some religions also acknowledge the need to protect the welfare of animals.

The earliest domestication of animals has been traced to a period of history when humans began farming which is the hunter-gather economy. The sheep was the first animal domesticated for food between 12,000 and 9000 BC in Southwest Asia. This was followed by the goat, Pigs and cattle, Dogs and Cats.

There are different reasons why humans and animals have interacted over the years. Animals have been kept as

domestic animals, pets, security, meat production, recreation, etc. by man and they have lived peacefully. The trend all these years was to have domestic animals such as goats, sheep, dogs, and cats within the household, however, there is a gradual paradigm shift from this to the keeping of wild animals. This recent practice no doubt encroaches on the space of both humans and animals and this has negative consequences for them. This section of this paper examines the various ways human activities by invading the space naturally assigned to animals and the consequences thereof.

The word ‘deforestation’ is capable of several definitions according to the context in which it is used. The popular definition associated with it is “the clearing of forests to accommodate new land for infrastructure, farming, and urbanization”. Ogunwale [17] also defines deforestation as “the process by which an area is deprived of its existing natural resources”.

In Nigeria, hunting of animals is restricted when it comes to some protected animal species such as the African grey parrot, pangolin, monkeys, etc. in other climes. Even though hunting is prohibited, it is still carried on in many rural communities. Deforestation has created a consistent threat to biodiversity in Nigeria which has been ranked with the highest rate of deforestation [18].

2. Case Study

The Akure-Ofosu Forest Reserve was examined as a case study for deforestation in this investigation. It helped explain the effect of deforestation in Nigeria and how it has affected the animal population.

3. Methodology

Historical records were checked and interviews were conducted along with literature reviewed to generate these reports on this forest reserve. Data for this article were sourced using qualitative and desk-based research methodologies to analytically examine human/animal conflicts using Akure-Ofosu Forest Reserves in Ondo State, Nigeria as a case study. Interviews were conducted with 30 respondents which included farmers, residents and park officials of the game reserve within 3 months (January-March 2022). Purposive and Snow-balling sampling techniques were employed to select interview respondents. Key interviews were conducted with ten park officials while the other respondents consisted of ten farmers and ten residents of Akure- Ofuse Forests reserve were interviewed. Scholarly works were sourced using desk-based methodologies to examine, understand, analyse and explain the current situation of events as it concerns animal welfare issues.

4. Results and Discussion

The Akure-Ofosu was established in Nigeria to protect the rainforest. This reserve was established in 1936 with a diverse population of wildlife at the risk of extinction [19]. It is located between latitude 5° 12' and 5°30'N, longitude 6° 50' and 7° 05' E (Figure 2) in the humid, tropical rainforest zone of Ondo State, Nigeria. Some of the animal species found in the forest reserve are red-capped mangabeys (*Cerocebus torquatus*), putty-nosed monkeys (*Cercopithecus nictitans*), and the endangered Nigerian-Cameroon chimpanzees (*pan troglodytes ellioti*). It is reported that between the years 2002 and 2020, this game reserve has been deprived of about 44% of its space [20]. The information from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration of the United States (NASA) suggests the possible and most reasonable cause for the depletion of this forest space could be fire. Incidents reported in the Akure-Ofosu forest reserve reveal that excessive logging, farming, and deliberate setting of the forest on fire, had been the main causes of deforestation in this region [21]. It was identified that the reason for deforestation of this forest reserve can be linked to unemployment and poverty, many graduates are unemployed and hence resort to farming. Reports have it that many unemployed graduates have farms in this forest reserve. The consequence of deforestation by human activities particularly in specially protected animals has

serious consequences. When animals' space is invaded this could bring about the demise of some animals. Some of these animals now stray into human space and are at risk of human attack. Humans are also open to attack from these animals, in terms of physical attack and the transmission of zoonotic diseases. Even though the government of Nigeria had established legislation to curb this practice but the menace continues [22].



Figure 1. Map of Nigeria [19]

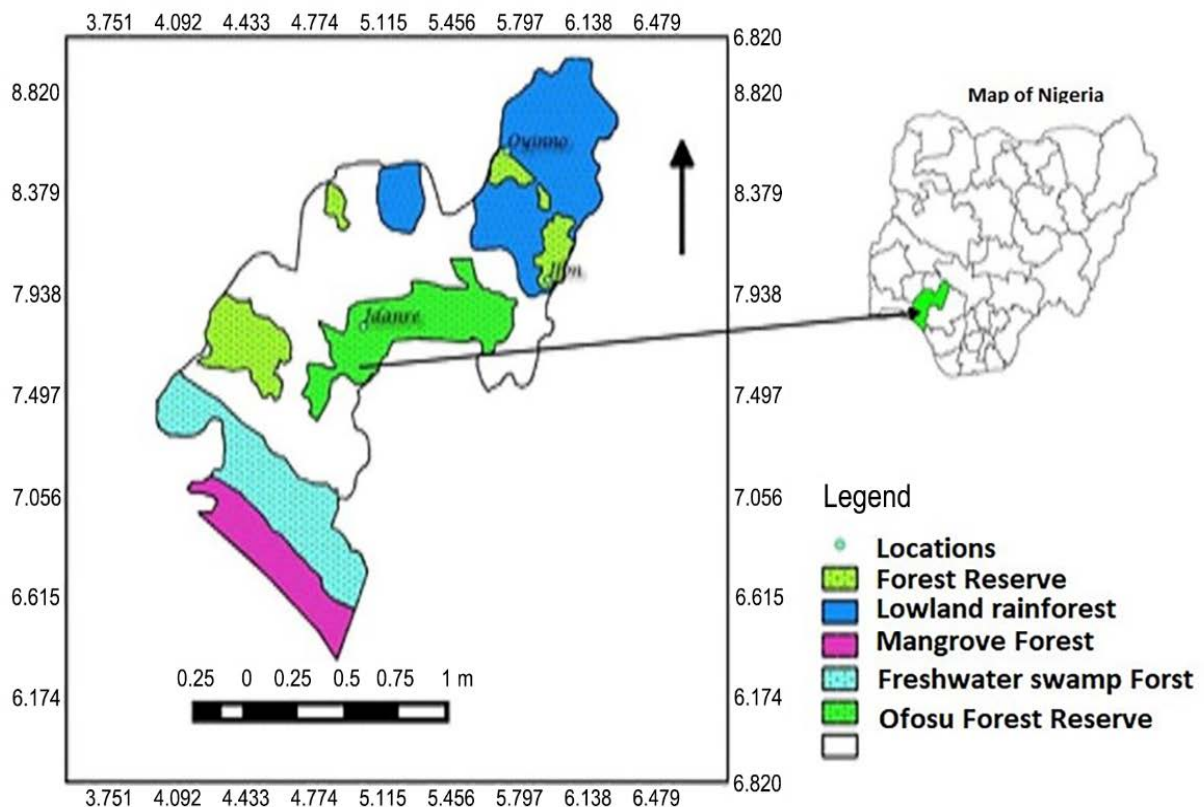


Figure 2. Map of Ondo State of Nigeria showing Akure-Ofosu Forest [23]

There are differing viewpoints on this issue, as there may be valid reasons for capturing wild or semi-wild animals and relocating them to different habitats [24]. Safina [25] suggested that animals may be relocated to decent zoos where they could aid scientists in achieving their educational goals while also assisting policymakers in protecting wild animals. She contends, however, that due to their social, psychological, and physical requirements as well as the fact that they live their entire lives in family groups, two species of animals cannot be maintained in captivity. Despite this, there has been an upsurge in the habit of capturing exotic animals as pets by private individuals during the previous two decades.

One of the most trafficked animals in Nigeria and other African countries is the pangolin. Evidence abounds that what has contributed to this illegal trade is the increasing demand for the body parts of some animals, with pangolin nails, scales, and elephant tusks being in the highest demand. Ajayi [26] emphasized that the situation of the Nigerian borders which are porous several has facilitated the undetected movement of animals and animal parts, particularly protected animals out of the country.

Illegal wildlife trade no doubt affects animals and the economic resource of man for it depletes the natural resources of a country. Mammals such as the pangolin for example have great benefits to man. It's been reported that a single pangolin can eat up millions of ants in a year. They feed on insects and serve as natural pest controllers. Though wildlife trade permitted is legal and regulated, the demands for certain species are posing a global conservation threat as an average of 100 million organisms are seized annually [27].

It is important to mention that meat industries in Nigeria are violating animal welfare rules and the well-being of animals through the cruel means of keeping animals during the transportation. The usual practice in Nigeria during the transportation of animals is to keep animals overcrowded in trucks for days without food and water, this practice is cruel and causes great inconvenience and suffering to animals during transportation. Some animals could wait until they are really hungry and thirsty before eating or drinking in a novel habitat linked with travel [28]. There are standards and recommendations for the transportation of animals, for instance, in England, dealing with welfare requirements of specific animals in terms of housing, space, allowance, ventilation, temperature, food, water, etc. [29]. These welfare codes were produced with the authority of the Controller of Her Majesty's stationery office Animals are expected to be transported in a way that will not cause injury or undue suffering to them. Besides these codes, some Codes approve the inspection of vehicles and trailers that transport animals [30]. This cannot be said to be the case in Nigeria. Discussions with animal handlers reveal that the high cost of transportation, insecurity, and bribe they have to give to officers throughout the journey particularly, considering the several checkpoint and bad roads, contribute to overcrowding their trucks with animals

to avoid several trips.

During colonial Nigeria, Ordinances such as the Wild Animals Preservation Ordinance, Disease of Animals Ordinance, and Forestry Ordinance to mention a few, were promulgated, these laws formed the basis for the statutes protecting animal welfare which were enacted after the colonial era. These statutes regulate human and animal interactions conforming to the Universal Declaration of Animal rights. There were subsequent Declarations such as the Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare (UDAW). Between 1980 and 1990, Nigeria subscribed to a good number of international Instruments, conventions, treaties, and protocols, some of which were domesticated as part of Nigeria's municipal laws. This era experienced reforms and improvements in environmental laws. Some of the laws are:

Some sections in the Criminal Code Act specifically address issues relating to animals particularly protecting endangered species and cruel acts. Section 394 provides that "any person who kills any animal capable of being stolen with the intent to steal the skin or carcass, or any part of the skin or carcass, is guilty of an offence and is liable to the same punishment as if he had this section prohibits the stolen the animal." The Criminal Code Act also criminalizes acts of cruelty to animals. This makes it punishable to ill-treat an animal through beating, torture, excessive work, terrifying an animal, etc. Section 214 makes it an offence in the Criminal Code to engage in bestiality and it attracts a term of fourteen years imprisonment upon conviction.

Section 497 provides that a person found guilty upon conviction for cruelty to animals under any of these subsections will in addition to being liable be deprived of the possession of the animal. When a person in charge of an animal or vehicle is taken into custody by a police officer, Section 498 of the Criminal Code Act expressly states that the person in charge must take custody of the animal or vehicle and place it in a place of safe custody until the end of the proceedings or until the court orders that the animal or vehicle be delivered to the person charged or to the owner. The realistic costs of such detention, including the reasonable costs of any veterinarian, are also covered by this express provision. Section 499 prescribed any issue arising from the sections. It is quite unfortunate and troubling that the sections of the Act mentioned above are grossly violated in Nigeria as a result of ignorance of the police on the requirement of the law.

The contents of this Act are similar to the Criminal Code for it protects animals from beating, cruelty, torture, and ill-treatment. According to the Act, a suspect may be detained by the police without the need of a warrant, and a Magistrate Court of the third Grade in Area Court Grade D shall hear the case. The provisions of Sections 495 and 499 of the Criminal Code and Sections 207 and 208 of the Penal Code are only slightly different in terms of their substance but not significantly different in terms of the ban of animal cruelty that they are intended to achieve.

“Whoever has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman, or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for a time which may be prolonged to fourteen years and shall be liable to pay a penalty fee.” This is hardly reported in Nigeria probably as a result of ignorance of the law or in a bid to prevent the culprit from being stigmatized.

The Ordinance Act of 1958 was passed in a bid to completely protect specific species in order and other valuable types of wildlife. This Ordinance limited the use of traps and weapons in addition to prohibiting the slaughter of female animals for game. Sections 4 and 5 of the 1958 Ordinance specifically prohibit the killing, hunting, or capturing of some animals.

Some birds are specially protected from indiscriminate killing and hunting, these birds are mentioned in the 3rd. Schedule with a proviso that whenever a person receives a permit from the Fire Arms Ordinance to own a small gun, such shall not permit the use of such a licensed gun to be used to kill protected birds, the only instance this may be permitted is where a further authorization in the form of silence is obtained under the 1985 Ordinance. Sections 7-13 of the Ordinance protect big mammals and other species of value from indiscriminate killing or hunting. In addition to this, their remains cannot be sold as trophies. This Ordinance discourages and criminalizes the poaching of animals. The foundations laid in this law brought about the enactment of the National Species Protection Act, 2015 otherwise known as the Endangered Species (Amendment) Act. The Act also makes it illegal to kill an animal that is protected out of need without reporting it and turning in the valuable parts of the animal to an Administrative officer.

Also, the National Wildlife Species Protection Act, the Endangered Species Control and International Trade (Amendment) Act of 2015 specifically protect hunting and trading in wild animals which are endangered. The implication of this is that animals which are on the brink of extinction as a result of excessive exploitation or habitat loss are protected from hunting and categorized into three schedules. The first schedule protects and lists animals that are threatened with extinction. This schedule lists 177 animals as protected against the 60 animals which were initially protected in the amended Act. The second schedule lists and protects animals that may be threatened with extinction except they are protected. This schedule protects 94 animals against the 33 animals protected in the amended 1958 Ordinance. Hunting of animals under this schedule may be done under a license. The third schedule is meant to list all animals not protected in the first and second schedules. It argued that all animals face the threat of extinction if not protected.

The National Park Service (Amendment) Act 2006 deals with the protection of flora and fauna in the nation's National Parks. The numbers of national parks subsisting in Nigeria are now 17 against the initial 8. This was necessitated under the "United Nations Policy of placing

25 percent of its member countries landmass vegetation undercover for carbon sequestration to reduce the effect of climate change and ameliorate other ecological challenges.”

Section 30 of the Act prohibits and restricts hunting in the national parks except where it is so authorized by the conservation-General if their things are present: “(a) wild animal ought to be hunted for the better preservation of other animals lives in the National Park, or (ii) a wounded animal ought to be destroyed; or (iii) to ensure that the population of a particular specie does not exceed the carrying capacity of the National park”. Section 37 of the Act deals with penalties and provides for a term of not less than three years but not exceeding five years without the option of a fine where an offence involves “the hunting, wounding, killing, or capturing of a mother of a young animal, large animal, or any endangered, protected or prohibited specie”.

The National Environmental Standard and Regulations Enforcement Agency (Establishment) (Amendment) Act 2018 is the most important educational instrument of the Environmental Laws positively affecting animals against Cruelty. NESREA Act was promulgated with commendable innovations that conform to the 21st-century realities on Animal Rights. The most commendable section of the NESREA Act is Section 7(c) which directs the Agency to enforce adherence to the terms of any international environmental agreements, protocols, conventions, and treaties as well as any additional commitments that may at any time become applicable. The Act implicitly defends animal rights, prohibits animal abuse, and promotes the welfare and health of animals.

This advancement is a positive one since it serves to remind Nigeria of her duty under the terms of Article 26 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties which states that "every treaty in force is binding upon the parties to it and must be performed by them in good faith." The implication of this is that The Universal Declaration on the Rights of Animals; Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, which have yet to be adopted as parts of our Municipal Laws, are relevant to and enforceable by Nigerian courts.

Nigeria has enacted laws protecting animals in various degrees and directing various ways animals should be handled bearing in mind their sentient nature and their welfare. Despite the plethora of laws protecting the welfare of animals their rights remain grossly violated in Nigeria. These violations can be linked to the struggle for survival and space by humans and animals. Human and animals conflict can be described as conflicts that occur between humans and animals.

Humans are pushed to invade animal territory for economic reasons and the consequence of this could lead to wild and dangerous animals escaping from the forest to become a threat to humans. When animals attack humans, in the cause of migration, there is a high possibility of the animal being killed. The section of the paper addresses

human-animal conflict. The various ways by which humans invade the space delineated by nature to animals have been addressed in prior paragraphs. The issue of deforestation has severe consequences for humans and most especially for animals. The expansion of human settlement and agricultural fields has resulted in the loss of animals such as elephants, pangolins, African grey parrots, red-bellied monkeys, etc. With the depletion of animal habitat size, humans experience the inevitable which is a progressive contact of animals with humans [31]. When animals particularly elephants invade human space they wreak havoc on farmer's crops through raiding, and cause injuries to humans and there have been recorded cases of death. Humans in return enter into animal territories; hunting down animals for animal parts such as pangolin scales and ivory. For a better understanding of human-animal conflict, this paper examined reported instances in Nigeria where communities had suffered losses as a result of animal invasion. It has been reported in several persons had suffered death and injuries as a result of elephants, crocodiles, hippopotamuses, and other animals that had strayed into their communities. Some of the communities that were mentioned are Ogun, Kebbi, Bauchi, and the Gombe State. Human and animal interaction had existed from the earliest years for they share food and other resources. These interactions could be either positive or negative and have not been devoid of conflict. Some of the factors identified as contributing to this conflict are as a result of urbanization and agriculture. The situation as it is today is quite unpleasant and dangerous for humans and animals. If this situation persists and remains unchecked it could lead to the destruction of farmlands, property, and the death of humans and animals. The destructive nature of elephants fosters resentment against them by humans for they are seen as constituting a nuisance and dangerous to be seen around humans. The farmers suffered hardship as a result of the destruction of farmlands and bodily injury. The destructive nature of elephants fosters resentment against them by humans for they are seen as constituting a nuisance and dangerous to be seen around humans.

The irony of the situation is that many of these wild animals that cause death and grievous bodily injuries to humans are animal species specially protected by law. Farmers are regularly educated by government agencies on the need to conserve wildlife and arrests are made from time to time when these animals are killed. These animals particularly elephants are recklessly poached for tusk not minding the negative consequence on the economy of the nation. The seriousness/sincerity of government in protecting lives and property is called to question at this point. If the human life is of value then efforts should be made to find a lasting solution to the persistent crises. Wildlife attracts tourism and the gains emanating from tourism form a huge financial base in other countries e.g. Kenya and South Africa. The Nigerian government should observe the workings in other climes bearing in mind the

peculiarity and find a lasting solution to this menace.

Wildlife trafficking is another serious criminal activity that involves the illegal removal of endangered animal species. Elephant tusks and pangolin scales are the most trafficked animal body parts. Trafficking has posed serious consequences to humans for some animals carrying zoonotic diseases that spread in the form of viruses, and bacteria. Trafficking depletes protected animal species or even extinction if not urgently checked [32].

If a peaceful co-existence of animals and humans in their spaces is what is desired, then there should be ways of reducing or resolving these conflicts to protect both interests and rights. The importance of a peaceful existence is evident in the exponential number of articles addressing this subject in the last 20 years.

The interactions between humans and animals are inevitable for they serve both positive and negative purposes. The relationship can be seen to be beneficial to man where a man uses animals for recreation, education, and other needs. It is negative where there is loss of lives, damage to property, and other negative consequences. On the other hand for animals, conflicts have caused a number of species to go extinct [33, 34].

5. Conclusions

This paper has summarized and synthesized factors that contribute to the persistent conflict and proffered solutions that could mitigate conflict and encourage the peaceful coexistence of humans and animals. Animals and humans have had a long time relationship which has translated into positive gains over the years. The quest for agricultural expansion, infrastructural development, poverty, and illegal wildlife trading have seriously affected the peaceful coexistence of animals and humans. What exists now is the struggle for space to satisfy both interests. This paper identified and justified the need to protect the welfare of animals which is protected by law and likewise identified the rights of humans to food, vegetation, infrastructure, and other human needs. It advocates that governmental agencies/NGOs saddled with conservation responsibility should be more proactive in ensuring peaceful coexistence. It concludes by emphasizing that the human-animal relationship is inevitable due to the mutual benefits enjoyed by humans and animals. The struggle for space which affects interests can be minimized as done in other climes if the government takes this issue seriously and puts in place necessary mechanisms to mitigate incidences of human and animal conflicts.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that government creates awareness about the benefits of conserving protected animal species and at the same time improve the management of forest

reserves to prevent animals from escaping to causing damage when exposed to the human population. There should be in place social and psychological interventions by government agencies. It is expected that farmers residing in places where wild animals have strayed for example elephants, be relocated, resettled, and compensated where they have suffered losses. This has been the plea of farmers residing around the Akure-Ofosu forest reserve in Nigeria over the years. This in turn translates to humans being more tolerant when in contact with animals and reporting the same to the appropriate agencies rather than taking laws into their hands by killing the same. Farmers who elect to reside where endangered species are situated should be educated on the kinds of crops to plant and the means of keeping these animals away from their farms. For example, elephants are known to be scared of bees.

Laws and policies regulating/protecting endangered species should be domesticated in our laws. The law in its present form only criminalizes international trade in these animals and not the sale within the country. The truth about the current situation in the country is that until poverty is eradicated, people will continue to explore the forests to satisfy their needs. Animals will continue to be hunted for food and body parts will continue to be sold indiscriminately. If the purpose of the laws protecting some species from being extinct is to be taken seriously, then it is recommended that there be in place more proactive measures in curbing this practice. There should be a place dedicated to forests where important mammal species such as the pangolin can be raised. Farmers should be made aware of the implications of farm produce when pangolins go extinct.

Non-governmental organizations and government agencies should partner together to constantly educate hunters periodically on the need to be selective with the animals they hunt. They should be made aware of the need for pregnant animals to be spared and for endangered species to be protected. Constant collaboration, participation, and stakeholder engagement have proved beneficial over the years. Some NGOs have constantly exposed the fate suffered by farmers in the hands of animals and this has attracted government attention. It is further recommended that these complaints be dedicated to the requisite attention needed. If government can relocate inhabitants of residential areas for other beneficial uses of land then the same should be done for farmers. Farmers residing in troubled forests could be equally assisted in terms of relocation and providing monetary aid. On the other hand wildlife such as elephants could be relocated to forest reserves when conflict exists.

Performance payments should be introduced to compensate people for the condition of wildlife abundance. Where protected wildlife is found in forests, the inhabitants of the community should be encouraged through monetary payments to protect these animals, which will in turn increase conservation objectives. The government should

be ready to put significant funds into enlightenment programmes across the country.

Lessons should be learned from other countries on how humans and wildlife live peacefully without conflicts. In Kenya for example, the killing of giraffes is illegal and attracts serious sanctions, people residing where giraffes are situated are compensated by the government by allowing them to make money through tourism from visitors.

Private keeping of exotic pets such as lions, tigers, snakes, alligators, and terrestrial tortoises should be discouraged by relevant agencies. It is expected that the proposed law in place by the Lagos State House of Assembly prohibiting ownership of wild animals as pets should be emulated by lawmakers in other states of Nigeria. The dangers of keeping these animals are that they can be released indiscriminately when they go wild or their keepers can no longer keep them,

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) do not capture the welfare of animals in its set goals nor is it made explicit, despite the relevance of animals in food security, employment and transport. Since animal welfare is crucial in the environment of sustainable development, future goals should adequately address this issue.

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