

## CAUSES AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES OF FARMERS-HERDERS CONFLICT IN OORELOPE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OYO STATE, NIGERIA.

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### **Abstract**

The study assessed the causes and management strategies of farmers – herdsmen conflicts in Oorelope Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. Multi stage sampling technique was employed to select 132 respondents for the study comprising both farmers and herdsmen. Interview schedule was used to elicit information for the study. The responses were analyzed using frequency counts and mean score. The results showed that about 47% and 43.90% of the farmers and herdsmen were respectively in the age range of 31 – 40 years with low level of education. The major perception of the farmers/herdsmen on the causes of conflicts were destruction of crops (mean = 4.95/4.98), theft of cattle (mean = 4.76/3.94), contamination of streams by cattle (mean = 4.23/4.95) and overgrazing of farmland (mean = 4.50/4.71). Farmers/herdsmen indicated the major methods of resolving conflicts to include traditional councils (90.9%/100%), courts (83.3%/100%), peaceful settlement (93.9%/100%), deliberate escape (80.3%/100%) and community based organization (CBO's) (87.9%/98.5%). The result also showed that reduction in output and income, displacement of farmers/herdsmen, reduction in food quality and quantity, loss of produce and storage were the major consequences of conflicts in the study area. The Z – test result showed significant difference between the perception of farmers and herdsmen ( $Z = 1.92 < 0.10$ ) on the causes of conflicts in the study area.

**Key words:** Farmers, Herdsmen, conflicts, resolution strategies.

### **Introduction**

The continuous struggles over the inestimable value for land and its resources overtime which culminated to the present day tension has resulted to inevitable conflicts in the claim for its scarce resources. Conflicts between pastoralists and farmers have existed since the beginning of agriculture which tends to increase or decrease in intensity and frequency depending on economic, environmental and other factors. This can be associated with increase in herd size due to improved conditions of the cattle thus compelling the pastoralists to seek for more pastures beyond their limited range (Bello, 2013). As Pastorals and cultivators have coexisted for a long time, the complexities over the land-use system have dramatically changed and thus leading to conflicts between herdsmen and farmers (Abbass, 2014). The constant antagonism over scarce resources is the fundamental cause of conflict between economic agents (Tonah, 2006). Hence, conflicts emanate from the insatiable nature of human wants and competition for scarce resources in most communities.

The most common causes of conflicts between crop farmers and grazers who both need land for their activities include the destruction of crops, contamination and blockages of streams by cattle, disregard for traditional authority by pastoralists, overgrazing, harassment of women by the nomadic herdsmen, bush burning, indiscriminate defecation by cattle on roads, theft or rustling (Ofuoku and Isife, 2009). Haro and Dayo (2005) observed that most times the Fulani herdsmen wander into the fields during growing season while their herds eat or trample on the crops due to the herdsmen's lack of attention or the cattle's stray movement which leads to rise in tension. In a similar vein, Tonah (2006) opined that the factors that account for the increasing farmer-herder conflicts include the southward movement of pastoral herds into the humid and sub-humid zones, promoted by the successful control of the menace posed by disease, the widespread availability of veterinary medicine and the expansion of farming activities into areas that hitherto served as pastureland. The pursuit of access to a variety of limited resources which includes grasslands, water spots for animals, rival claims

to land and discrimination in access to social and natural resources give rise to series of conflicts in many communities (Ofem and Iyang, 2014). The continuing Fulani Pastoralists' militancy for the survival of their cattle makes fierce struggle and violent conflicts with farmers inevitable. The settlement of grazers raises a number of conflicts, first of all within themselves since they find it difficult to give up their extensive grazing habits and secondly with local communities, who claim to be first settlers thus imposing a superiority complex and rights over land (Nformi *et al.*, 2014).

Conflicts causes a lot of havocs to the community with effects ranging from loss of livestock, households, human lives, property, displacement of the residence (host communities) thereby increasing the number of the internally displaced persons in the country. Other resultant effects of conflicts include bloodshed, generation of inter-group tension, waste of resources, time and energy which could have been summed-up together to produce food and other resources capable of increasing the economic growth of the country (Ofuoku and Isife, 2009; Fiki and Lee, 2004; Olabode and Ajibade, 2010; Nformi *et al.*, 2014).

Even while the state and the local government have stepped up ways of bringing co-existence among the herdsmen and crop farmers, the unresolved issues on grazing land and water spots which is central to the economic survival of both the herdsmen and farming communities remain unresolved as the conflict abates. From the foregoing, it is pertinent to adopt sustainable structure to mitigation of farmers-herdsmen conflicts in Nigeria. Both the farmers and herdsmen have different perspective, peculiarities and production variables that are crucial to their survival and management practices. The competition over scarce land resources is increasingly posing a challenge to agricultural activities in the grass fields as farmers and herders struggle for land for cultivation and grazing practices respectively. The major growing season which ranges from March to September and dry season cropping which is restricted to the lowlands, forests and along river banks, sometimes blocking cattle tracks leading to various drinking points. These usually cause the cattle to trespass and destroy crops, resulting to conflicts among farmers and grazers. The understanding of farmer-herder

relations is a key to conflict resolution or management. This will help our understanding of the proximate and underlying causes of conflict, the behavioral patterns that are most conducive to provoking or avoiding conflict and the main mechanisms by which conflict between the groups are resolved or managed. It is based on the foregoing that this study was undertaken to assess the causes and management strategies of farmers-herders conflict in Oorelope Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

1. describe the socio-economic characteristics of farmers and herdsmen in the study area;
2. examine the reasons of farmers and herdsmen conflicts in the study area;
3. examine the strategies employed for conflict resolution in the study area and
4. assess the socio-economic effects of conflict on the farmers and herdsmen in the study area;

#### **Methodology**

The study was conducted in Oorelope Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The Local Government is located towards the north axis of the State in the Oke-ogun zone area. The Local Government has 10 wards with various villages under each ward. It has a population of over 136,764; farming and hunting are their predominant occupation which is mostly practice at a subsistence level (National Population Commission, (NPC), 2006). The research design was a descriptive survey method and the population of the study comprises of farmers and herdsmen in the study area. Multi stage sampling technique was employed for the study. The first stage involves random selection of 3 wards from the 10 political wards in the study area. Secondly, simple random sampling technique was applied to select 4 rural areas from each selected ward. A total of 66 farmers and herdsmen were randomly selected based on the proportion of the population of the respondents in the selected rural areas. In all a total of 132 respondents were interviewed for the study. Interview schedule was used to elicit data from the respondents. The responses were analyzed using frequency counts and mean score. A 5 points Likert rating scale of strongly agree (SA = 5), Agree (A= 4), Undecided (U=3), Disagree (DS =2) and Strongly disagree (SD= 1) were used to rank the statements based on the perception of farmers on the causes of farmer-herder conflict. The ranking of priority of

causes of conflicts was made on the bases of weighted mean (WM) score which was calculated by multiplying the frequency counts of respective perception statements with their respective scale number. This was further used to classify the causes of conflicts in the study area as either major or low causes of conflicts. Hence, statements with weighted mean scores greater than or equal to three ( $\geq 3.0$ ) were considered as “major causes” and below the mean ( $< 3.0$ ) as “low causes”. The formulated hypothesis was “there is no significant relationship the perception of farmers and herdsmen on the causes of conflicts in the study area”. Z – Test was used to test the formulated hypothesis of the study.

### Results and Discussion

#### Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents:

**Age of respondents:** this is generally assumed that as human age increases the rate of experience on various activities also increase

and it is most often used to classify rural population into targetable groups (Tyabo *et al.*, 2014). The result in Table 1 shows that about 47% and 43.90% of the farmers and herdsmen were respectively in the age range of 31 – 40 years. This is an indication that most of the respondents were young adults who were

still strong and capable of undertaking rigorous activities in farming and herding of livestock in the study area.

**Level of education of respondents:** The result in Table 1 reveals that 37.9% and 57.6% of the farmers and herdsmen in the study area respectively do not have any formal education. The result also indicated that only 24.20% of the farmers and 6.10% of herdsmen have attained up to secondary school in the study area. The result implies that the level of education of both respondents is low in the study area. The trend of the results may lead to low level of understanding between them and may increase the tendency of their exposure to the risks of conflicts, their ability to reach consensus and achieve equilibrium for peaceful co-existence in the study area (Charles, 2005).

**Farm size:** The findings of the study (Table 1) showed that majority (60.60%) of the farmers cultivated 3 -4 hectares of land while 59.10% of herdsmen cultivate only 1-2 hectares of land in the study area. The small sizes of farm cultivated by the herdsmen could be associated with their nomadic lifestyle which makes them to constantly keep migrating from place to place and hence, they mostly cultivated only the surroundings of their temporary settlements popularly known as Ruga.

**Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents in the study area (n = 66)**

| Characteristics            | Farmers<br>Herdsmen |            |           |            |
|----------------------------|---------------------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                            | Frequency           | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| <b>Age (Years)</b>         |                     |            |           |            |
| <30                        | 2                   | 3          | 12        | 18.20      |
| 31 - 40 years              | 31                  | 47         | 29        | 43.9       |
| 41 - 50 years              | 23                  | 34.8       | 18        | 27.3       |
| > 50 years                 | 10                  | 15.20      | 7         | 10.6       |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>66</b>           | <b>100</b> | <b>66</b> | <b>100</b> |
| <b>Levels of education</b> |                     |            |           |            |
| Islamic education          | 2                   | 3          | 14        | 21.2       |
| No formal education        | 25                  | 37.9       | 38        | 57.6       |
| Primary education          | 13                  | 19.7       | 10        | 15.2       |
| Secondary education        | 16                  | 24.2       | 4         | 6.1        |
| Tertiary education         | 10                  | 15.2       | 0         | 0          |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>66</b>           | <b>100</b> | <b>66</b> | <b>100</b> |
| <b>Farm size ( htr)</b>    |                     |            |           |            |
| 0                          | 0                   | 0          | 22        | 33.3       |
| 1 – 2                      | 15                  | 22.70      | 39        | 59.1       |
| 3 -5                       | 40                  | 60.60      | 5         | 7.6        |
| > 5                        | 11                  | 16.7       | 0         | 0          |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>66</b>           | <b>100</b> | <b>66</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: Field survey, 2015.

#### Perception of respondents on the causes of farmer-herder conflicts

The results in Table 2 show the distribution of the respondents' weighted mean

scores on perception of farmers on causes of farmers-herders conflict in the study area. The result shows that the farmers expressed positive response towards seven (7) out of eight (8)

statements while herdsmen expressed six (6) out of nine (9) statements bordering on causes of farmers-herdsmen conflicts in the study area. On the bases of classification, the statements that elicited the major perception on the causes of conflicts from the farmers/herdsmen views included destruction of crops (mean = 4.95/4.98), theft of cattle (mean = 4.76/3.94), contamination of streams by cattle (mean = 4.23/4.95) and overgrazing of farmland (mean = 4.50/4.71). Other major causes were indiscriminate defecation by cattle on roads and indiscriminate bush burning. The findings

implied that farmers-herdsmen conflict is caused as result of disagreement on natural resources and social disunity among the farmers and the herdsmen in the study area. Haro and Dayo, (2005); Ofuoku and Isife, (2009) reported that conflicts between farmers and herdsmen arose as result of the destruction of crops by herders, contamination of streams by cattle, over-grazing of farm land which leads to soil degradation, harassment of non-Fulani women by the nomadic herders, bush burning, indiscriminate defecation by cattle on roads and theft or rustling of cattle.

**Table 2: Perception of farmers/herdsmen on the causes conflicts (n= 66)**

| Causes of conflicts                          | Farmers |        |                 | Herdsmen |        |                 |
|----------------------------------------------|---------|--------|-----------------|----------|--------|-----------------|
|                                              | WS      | WM     | Rank            | WS       | WM     | Rank            |
| Destruction of crops                         | 327     | 4.95** | 1 <sup>st</sup> | 329      | 4.98** | 1 <sup>st</sup> |
| Contamination of streams by cattle           | 279     | 4.23** | 5 <sup>th</sup> | 327      | 4.95** | 2 <sup>nd</sup> |
| Overgrazing of farmland                      | 279     | 4.50** | 3 <sup>rd</sup> | 311      | 4.71** | 3 <sup>rd</sup> |
| Sexual harassment of women by nomads         | 209     | 3.17** | 7 <sup>th</sup> | 132      | 2.00*  | 8 <sup>th</sup> |
| Harassment of nomads by host youth           | 163     | 2.47*  | 8 <sup>th</sup> | 174      | 2.64*  | 7 <sup>th</sup> |
| Indiscriminate defecation by cattle on roads | 277     | 4.20** | 6 <sup>th</sup> | 224      | 4.48** | 4 <sup>th</sup> |
| Theft of cattle                              | 314     | 4.76** | 2 <sup>nd</sup> | 260      | 3.94** | 5 <sup>th</sup> |
| Indiscriminate bush burning                  | 283     | 4.29** | 4 <sup>th</sup> | 259      | 3.92** | 6 <sup>th</sup> |

\*\*mean scores  $\geq 3$  = major causes of conflicts; \* mean scores  $< 3$  = low causes of conflicts

WS = Weighted sum; WM = Weighted mean.

Source: Field survey, 2015.

### Methods of resolving conflicts by respondents

Conflict can be resolved in many ways through different strategies, although not all the strategies have proved to be effective due to one reason or the other. The essence of conflict resolution is to understand the patterns and appearances of the conflict, how it looks when it rears its ugly head, knowing the alternatives available for dealing with the disagreement and measures to adopt to arrive at amicable resolution without each party feeling any element of dissatisfaction. The result in Table 3 reveals the conflict resolution strategies as perceived by the respondents in the study area. From the Table, the major methods of resolving conflicts as indicated by both farmers/herdsmen included traditional councils (90.90%/100%),

courts (83.30%/100%), peaceful settlement (93.90%/100%), deliberate escape (80.30%/100%) and community based organization (CBO's) (87.90%/98.50%). Another method indicated by both the farmers (81.2%) and herdsmen (98.8%) was open confrontation which has serious negative consequences on the parties. This result supports the report of Nformi *et al.* (2014) that the most significant methods of conflicts resolution are arbitration, mediation and direct negotiation between the Fulani and the host communities. All these are done to bring the two parties together, exchange interest and views through which mutual point of conclusion is reached which is acceptable by the two parties involve.

**Table 3: Distribution based on the methods of resolving conflicts by respondents (n=66)**

| Methods of conflicts resolution      | Farmers |      | Herdsmen |      |
|--------------------------------------|---------|------|----------|------|
|                                      | Freq    | (%)  | Freq     | (%)  |
| Traditional council                  | 60      | 90.9 | 66       | 100  |
| Courts                               | 55      | 83.3 | 66       | 100  |
| Peaceful settlement                  | 62      | 93.9 | 66       | 100  |
| Deliberate escape                    | 53      | 80.3 | 66       | 100  |
| Agricultural agents                  | 10      | 15.2 | 6        | 9.1  |
| Open confrontation                   | 54      | 81.8 | 65       | 98.8 |
| Government intervention              | 21      | 31.8 | 0        | 0    |
| Religious institution                | 7       | 10.6 | 2        | 3    |
| Help from relation                   | 32      | 48.5 | 25       | 37.9 |
| Community based Organization (CBO's) | 58      | 87.9 | 65       | 98.5 |

Source: Field survey, 2015.

**Consequences of conflicts on the livelihood of the respondents**

Conflict causes more havoc on the communities than good. These effects which range from destruction of properties to the displacement of the residence (host communities) thereby increasing the number of the internally displaced persons in the country and also waste of resources, time and energy which could have been summed-up together to produce food and other resources capable of increasing the economic growth of the country (Ofuoku and Isife, 2009). The results in Table 4 show the consequences of conflicts on the

livelihood of the farmers and herdsman in the study area. From the Table, the major consequences indicated by the respondents included reduction in output and income, displacement of farmers/herdsman, reduction in food quality and quantity, loss of produce and storage, leads to anger/emotional exhaustion/anxiety and physical exhaustion. Fiki and Lee, (2004); Olabode and Ajibade (2010) reported that conflicts between host communities and Fulani herdsman have led to loss of livestock, income, households and human lives.

**Table 4: Distribution of respondents' view on the consequences of conflicts (n=66)**

| Consequences of conflict               | Farmers |      | Herdsman |      |
|----------------------------------------|---------|------|----------|------|
|                                        | Freq    | (%)  | Freq     | (%)  |
| Reduction in output and income         | 65      | 98.5 | 66       | 100  |
| Displacement of farmers/herdsman       | 61      | 92.4 | 66       | 100  |
| Anger/emotional exhaustion/anxiety     | 54      | 81.8 | 64       | 97   |
| Loss of lives                          | 41      | 62.1 | 29       | 43.9 |
| Reduction in food quality and quantity | 57      | 86.4 | 66       | 100  |
| Loss of house and property             | 36      | 54.5 | 65       | 98.5 |
| Loss of produce and storage            | 59      | 89.4 | 66       | 100  |
| Complaints at home                     | 42      | 63.6 | 46       | 69.7 |
| Staying more away from home            | 35      | 53   | 36       | 54.5 |
| Farm/job abandonment                   | 25      | 37.9 | 45       | 68.2 |
| Physical exhaustion                    | 45      | 68.2 | 62       | 93.9 |
| Sleepless nights                       | 42      | 63.6 | 58       | 87.9 |

Source: Field survey, 2015.

The result in Table 5 show that there was significant difference between the perception of farmers and herdsmen ( $Z = 1.92 < 0.10$ ) on the causes of conflicts in the study area. The different can be associated to the difference in

the views of the respondents on the causes of conflicts in the study area. This can be buttressed by Ofuoku and Isife (2009) who reported that the farmers and herdsmen have different views on the causes of conflicts.

**Table 5: Z -test analysis of the difference between the perception of farmers and herdsmen on the causes of conflicts in the study area.**

| Variables                                      | Mean  | Std. deviation | Std. error of mean | Z - value | p value | Df | Decision |
|------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------|--------------------|-----------|---------|----|----------|
| Farmers perception on the causes of conflicts  | 38.76 | 3.88           | 0.48               |           |         |    |          |
|                                                |       |                |                    | 1.92      | 0.10    | 65 | S        |
| Herdsmen perception on the causes of conflicts | 37.68 | 2.85           | 0.35               |           |         |    |          |

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

### Conclusion and recommendation

From the findings of the study, the educational level of respondents is low in the study area and this may lead to low level of understanding between them and may trigger the tendency of their exposure to the risks of conflicts. The major causes of farmers – herdsmen conflicts as perceived by the respondents were destruction of crops, theft of cattle, contamination of streams by cattle, overgrazing of farmland and indiscriminate bush burning. The conflicts resolution strategies as perceived by the respondents were through traditional councils, courts, peaceful settlement, deliberate escape and community based organization (CBO's). The major consequences of conflicts on the community were reduction in output and income,

displacement of farmers/herdsmen, reduction in food quality and quantity, loss of produce and storage, leads to anger/emotional exhaustion/anxiety and physical exhaustion. A joint committee comprising of government, stake holders of farmers and herdsmen should be established in order to reach an agreement on a legally defined (demarcated) lands for farming and grazing of livestock. Agro-pastoral commission should be established and be saddled with the responsibilities of land demarcation for farming and grazing as well as resolution of conflicts when they arise.

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