

**IMPACT OF COMMUNAL CONFLICT ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY AND
RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AMONG FARMING COMMUNITIES IN BENUE AND NASARAWA
STATES**

BY

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Abstract

The study assesses effects of communal conflict on agricultural productivity and resolution strategies among farming communities in Benue and Nasarawa states. The study was guided by two specific objectives, two research questions and two null hypotheses. The researcher adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was all farmers, herdsmen and traditional rulers in Benue and Nasarawa states. Two hundred and forty sample (240) comprising of 100 farmers, 100 herdsmen and 40 traditional rulers from Benue and Nasarawa states were purposively and conveniently selected for the study. Structured questionnaire as well as interview schedule was used as instruments for data collection. Face to face method of instrument delivery with the help of three research assistants was used to distribute the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to answer all the research questions. Inferential statistics of ANOVA was used to test all the null hypotheses at 0.05 levels of significance. The results of the analysis revealed that Communal conflict affect farming communities, result to low agricultural production, leads to famine among households, decreases their family income, affect the education of the children, bridge the peaceful coexistence among the farming communities as well low food supply in the market square. Demarcation between farming sites and grazing routes, adoption and implementation of effective land use and environmental policies and promotion of religious tolerance by traditional rulers and other relevant stakeholders are significant strategies in achieving conflict resolution among farming communities but use of court of law in solving farmers/herders conflict. The researchers concluded that communal conflict wage serious war against agricultural productivity in Benue and Nasarawa states. The implication is that if the functional strategies are not put in place to resolving conflict between farming communities, agricultural production within the states would not be sustained. The researchers therefore, recommended that farmers/herdsmen traditional rulers, state and federal government as well as international community should make untiring efforts to educate and enlighten the farmers and herdsmen on the need to co-exist in peace for sustainable agricultural development.

Keywords: Communal Conflict, Agricultural Productivity, Resolution Strategies

Introduction

In Nigeria, communal ethnic conflict has been a major setback in the development of agricultural productivity and the economy at large. Conflict is defined by the world health organization as “the use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation”, but acknowledges that the inclusion of “the use of power” in its definition expands on the conventional meaning of the word (Krug, 2002). Globally, violence resulted in the death of 1.28 million people in 2013 up from 1.13 million in 1990 (GND 2013). In Africa, out of every 100,000 people, each year an estimated 60.9 percent die a violent death (Anarfi, 2014).

An ethnic conflict is a conflict between two or more contending ethnic groups. While the source of the conflict may be political, social, economic or religious, the individuals in conflict must expressly fight for their ethnic group's position within society. The major root causes of ethnic violence include political, economic, and social inequalities; extreme poverty; economic stagnation; poor government services; high unemployment; environmental degradation; and individual (economic) incentives to fight (Anarfi, 2014) ethnic violence often occurs as a result of individual domestic disputes spiraling out of control to large scale conflicts.

Olayoku (2014) reported that some cases of communal crises in Benue and Nasarawa states among Jukun and Tiv, Ipav and Ukan, Tiv and Fulani, Egbura and Bassa and Affo and Agatu are triggered due to the pursuit of access to the variety of limited resources which includes chieftaincy positions, powers, rival status, grass land, markets, water spots for animals, rival claim to land, government policies, leadership of political parties and the rest. A study of major source of conflict in the affected states revealed that land matter accounted for the highest percentage (42.9%) of conflict followed by political (32.08%) and the chieftaincy matters (28.3%) respectively (Uka, 2015). A high percentage of conflict arising from the disputes has to do with land matters and conflict between Fulani herdsmen and Tiv farmers over grazing land. The state played a key role in the conflict of land in three (3) critical levels, viz: (1) the state inability to address the indigene and settler phenomenon in the Nigerian constitution. The unresolved issue on grazing land and water spot that is central to the economic survival of both the herdsmen and farming communities.

To manage communal conflicts in Nigeria will involve adopting two approaches. The first is the preventive approach and the second, the long term approach. The preventive approach involves the evolvement of strategies that will tackle its causes, to reduce the level of incidence of communal conflicts in communities in the country. The preventive strategies will take the understanding of the causes of the conflict. This will provoke the provision of the following facilities to reduce it: enforcement of land control by the government, determination of the extent of boundaries for proper adjustment, provision of basic infrastructural facilities in communities, zoning of political positions in communities, control of arms inflow into communities, equitable distribution of resources, and promotion of mutual respect for people. The second, which is the long term approach, entails the development of early warning system in communities and the adoption of peace education program suitable to tackle the peculiar nature of the conflict in communities (Uka, 2015).

Communal conflict seems to be threatening the food basket status of the state with its resultant effect on shortage of labour supply, loss of live, destruction of crops, livestock and other valuable properties. Furthermore, ethnic violence has disrupted the supply and distribution of inputs and outputs, create price shock and cause massive displacement of labour. These compounding challenges make agricultural productivity difficult to maintain in volatile environments and maybe the resolution strategies in place are not effective in curbing the problems. Is on this premise that the researchers are motivated to assess the effects ethnic conflict has on agricultural productivity and proffer possible resolution strategies.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the impact of communal conflict on agricultural productivity and resolution strategies among farming communities in Benue and Nasarawa States. Specifically, the study sought to determine the impact of:

1. communal conflict on agricultural yield perceived by farmers, herdsmen and traditional rulers.
2. the conflict resolution strategies among the farming communities perceived by farmers, herdsmen and traditional rulers

Research Questions

Two research questions guided the study.

- i. What are the impact of communal conflict on agricultural productivity perceived by farmers, herdsmen and traditional rulers?
- ii. What are the conflict resolution strategies among the farming communities perceived by farmers, herdsmen and traditional rulers?

Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the perception of farmers, herders and traditional rulers on the effects of communal conflict on agricultural productivity.

H₀₂: The conflict resolution strategies by traditional institutions as perceived by farmers, herdsmen and traditional rulers are not significant.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study is all farmers, herders and traditional rulers in Benue and Nasarawa states. The sample of the study is 240 comprise of 100 farmers(50 each from Benue and Nasarawa states), 100 herders (50 each from Benue and Nasarawa states) and 40 traditional rulers(20 each from Benue and Nasarawa states). Purposive sampling technique was employed to select participating farming communities. The reason for purposive sampling was based on the communities with high incidence of ethnic conflict. Convenient sampling method was also used to select farmers, herders and traditional rulers. The instrument for data collection is questionnaire. The instrument is tagged Effects of Communal Conflict on Agriculture and Resolution Strategies (ECCARS). The instrument was designed on 4 points rating scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Face to face method of delivery as well as interview schedule was used to collect data. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to answer all research questions while ANOVA was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 levels of significance.

Results

Research Question One: What are the effects of communal conflict on agricultural productivity perceived by farmers, herdsman and traditional rulers?

Table 1: Perception of farmers, herders and traditional rulers on communal conflict on agricultural productivity

	Statement	Farmers		Herders		Trad. Rulers	
		X	SD	X	SD	X	SD
1	Communal conflict halt farming in our villages	3.4	.88	3.0	.92	3.4	.74
2	Communal conflict results to low agricultural production in the communities	3.1	.92	3.0	1.0	3.1	.11
3	Communal conflict put my family to famine	2.9	.87	3.2	.98	2.8	.91
4	The conflict affects my income to buy other family needs	3.3	.80	3.2	.96	3.0	.81
5	Communal conflict affects the schooling of my children	2.7	.91	3.3	.92	3.0	.89
6	The general peaceful coexistence of the community is affected by the conflict	3.0	.82	2.9	.91	3.0	.86
7	There is also shortage of food supply in the market	2.9	.65	2.7	.21	3.1	.46
Total		3.04		3.04		3.05	

X = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Table 1 shows the differences in the perception of farmers, herders and traditional rulers Communal conflict on agricultural productivity. The results revealed calculated mean scores of farmers, herders and traditional rulers for the 7 items to be equal to or more than 2.5 benchmarks to agree. This means that all categories of respondents agreed that communal conflict affect farming their communities, result to low agricultural production, leads to famine among households, decreases their family income, affect the education of the children, bridge the peaceful coexistence among the farming communities as well low food supply in the market square. This implied that communal conflict has effects on agricultural productivity in Benue and Nasarawa states.

Research Question; What are the conflict resolution strategies among the farming communities perceived by farmers, herdsman and traditional rulers?

Table 2: Perception of farmers, herders and traditional rulers on conflict resolutions strategies among farming communities

	Statement	Farmers		Herders		Trad. Rulers	
		X	SD	X	SD	X	SD
1	Clear demarcation between farming sites and grazing routes	3.3	.74	2.6	.92	3.2	.74
2	Adoption and implementation of effective land use and environmental policies	2.9	.11	3.2	1.0	3.0	.11
3	Promotion of religious tolerance by traditional rulers and other relevant stakeholders	2.6	.91	3.1	.98	2.9	.91
4	Involving court of law in solving farmers/herders	1.3	.81	2.1	.96	1.5	.81

conflict							
5 Use of legal security agencies like police, civil defence, mobile police etc.	1.7	.89	2.2	.92	2.3	.89	
Total	2.3		2.6		2.5		

X = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation,

Table 2 shows the significant conflict resolution strategies among the farming communities. The results revealed calculated mean scores of farmers, herders and traditional rulers for items 1, 2 and 3 to be equal to or more than 2.5 benchmarks to agree while items 4 and 5 had mean scores less than 2.5 benchmark. This means that clear demarcation between farming sites and grazing routes, adoption and implementation of effective land use and environmental policies and promotion of religious tolerance by traditional rulers and other relevant stakeholders are significant strategies in achieving conflict resolution between farmers and herders communities but opined that the use of court of law in solving farmers/herders conflict and use of legal security agencies like police and civil defence are ineffective.

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the perception of farmers, herders and traditional rulers on the effects of communal conflict on agricultural productivity

Table 3: ANOVA Statistics on Perception of farmers, herders and traditional rulers on the effects of communal conflict on agricultural productivity

Respondents	X	SD	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Farmers	3.04	.342					
Herders	3.04	.726					
Traditional Rulers	3.05	.921					
Between Groups			127.530	3	42.510	2.50	.186
Within Groups			270.157	237	1.889		
Total			397.687	240			

X = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, (P-value < 0.05)

Table 3 shows differences in the perception of farmers, herders and traditional rulers on the effects of communal conflict on agricultural productivity. The results revealed calculated F-value of 2.50 with sig. value of .186. Since the p-value of .186 is greater than the alpha value of 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis that says there is no significant difference in the perception of farmers, herders and traditional rulers on the effects of communal conflict on agricultural productivity is therefore retained. This means that communal conflict has significant effects on agricultural productivity.

Null Hypothesis Two: The conflict resolution strategies by traditional institutions as perceived by farmers, herdsmen and traditional rulers are not significant.

Table 2: ANOVA Statistics on Perception of farmers, herders and traditional rulers conflict resolution strategies

Respondents	X	SD	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Farmers	2.30	.342					
Herders	2.61	.726					
Traditional Rulers	2.56	.921					
Between Groups			86.157	3	28.719	23.183	.000
Within Groups			311.530	237	2.179		
Total			397.687	240			

X = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, (P-value < 0.05)

Table 4 shows the differences in the perception of farmers, herders and traditional rulers regarding conflict resolution strategies. The results revealed calculated F-value of 23.183 with sig. value of .000. Since the p-value of .000 is less than the alpha value of 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis that says conflict resolution

strategies by traditional institutions as perceived by farmers, herdsmen and traditional rulers in Africa are not significant is therefore rejected. This implied that strategies such as clear demarcation between farming sites and grazing routes, adoption and implementation of effective land use and environmental policies and promotion of religious tolerance by traditional rulers and other relevant stakeholders are significant in solving conflict between farmers and herders communities while involving court of law and use of legal security agencies like police and civil defence are not significant.

Discussion of Findings

Communal conflict affect farming communities, result to low agricultural production, leads to famine among households, decreases their family income, affect the education of the children, bridge the peaceful coexistence among the farming communities as well low food supply in the market square. This finding is also in line with Onyemeachi (2014) which linked ethnic violence to poor governance and competition for power by ethnic groups, and that most of the ethnic crisis in Nigeria can be traceable to politics. Onyemachi (2014) stated that use of land resource and other tangible interest continue to provoke violence between ethnic groups. Adekunle and Adisa (2010) stated that the loss of human lives, farmland, animals, plants and crops has much security, social, political and economic implication including impact on agricultural production in Nigeria. This is also in line with the findings that ethnic violence hinders daily income, starve livestock to death, leads to deterioration of produce and stop farming activities. Demarcation between farming sites and grazing routes, adoption and implementation of effective land use and environmental policies and promotion of religious tolerance by traditional rulers and other relevant stakeholders are significant strategies in achieving conflict resolution among farming communities but use of court of law in solving farmers/herders conflict and use of legal security agencies like police and civil defence are ineffective. This finding is also in line with report of Ibrahim and Abass (2017) who averred that part of the effective strategies to reduce the farmers/herders conflict to a very low degree is to clearly demarcate between farming sites and grazing routes. Proper policing of rural and agrarian communities in the affected states can lead to effective resolution and management of farmers/herdsmen conflict. They also lamented that stiffer arms possession and usage policy across Nigeria is an effective strategy for resolution and management among the farming communities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the researchers concluded that communal conflict wage serious war against agricultural productivity in Benue and Nasarawa states. The implication is that if the functional strategies are not put in place to resolving conflict between farming communities, agricultural production within the states would not be sustained.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

The farmers/herdsmen traditional rulers, state and federal government as well as international community should make untiring efforts to educate and enlighten the farmers and herdsmen on the need to co-exist in peace for sustainable agricultural development.

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