



Community Leaders and Management of Pastoralist–Farmer Conflicts in Benue and Nasarawa States, Nigeria

Adeola Aderayo Adebajo and Abraham Olatomiwa Adebajo*

Department of Political Science, Tai Solarin University of Education, Nigeria

*Corresponding author. E-mail address: adebajoabraham@gmail.com

Received: 30 April 2022; Revised: 15 September 2022; Accepted: 20 September 2022

Abstract

Pastoralist–farmer conflict has become a recurrent decimal aggravating the security challenges in Benue an Nasarawa states. Government and civil society groups have intervened in the conflict, yet, it remains intractable, causing numerous deaths and massive internal displacement of people. The paper assessed the conflict management mechanisms adopted by the community leaders in managing the conflict between pastoralists and farmers in Benue and Nasarawa states. Conflict transformation theory was used to anchor the paper. A validated questionnaire was used to collect data from Non–Governmental Organisations and victims of the conflict. The quantitative data were analysed using simple percentages. Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized in eliciting information. Ten in–depth interviews were conducted with farmers, pastoralists, community leaders, Non–Governmental Organisations officials and law enforcement agents in the two states. The qualitative data from the interviews were content analysed in line with the research objectives. It was found that pastoralist–farmer conflict was managed by the community leaders making use of negotiation, mediation and alternative dispute resolution. However, the management of the conflict was characterised by extortion, erosion of the traditional authorities and lack of skills by the community leaders. The paper concluded that the management of pastoralist–farmer conflict by the community leaders has not been effective as a result of lack of the traditional integrity and conflict management skills. It is recommended that there is need for training and re–training of the community leaders in conflict management skills. The traditional value systems need to be resuscitated right from the community level in order reduce the level of corruption by the leaders.

Keywords: Conflict Management, Community Leaders, Conflict Transformation Theory, Farmer, Pastoralist–Farmer Conflict, Pastoralist

Introduction

Conflict is an ubiquitous challenge of life affecting human lives in so many ways. Nigeria is not exempted from the problem of violent conflicts including ethnic, religious, inter and intra communal clashes. Benue and Nasarawa states in particular have witnessed conflict situations ranging from political, religious, communal to resource based. For instance, in Benue state, there were conflicts the Tiv and Fulani in Makurdi, Mbajir/Nongu violence in Guma and Tarka and Tiv/Idoma crises. The conflicts have led to socio–economic disruption, killings, maiming and family disintegration due to mass displacement. Also in Nasarawa state, there were occurrences of violent conflicts between Igbira and Bassa over chieftdom. An orgy of violence occurred between Tiv and their neighbouring ethnic groups in Obi, Awe and Keana local government areas of Nasarawa state (Ugwu & Enna, 2015). Compounding the precarious situation in the two states is the ravaging conflict between pastoralists and farmers which seems to defy all measures of resolution ever adopted. The conflict between the two agricultural groups has become intractable in spite of different interventionist mechanisms adopted.

There are remote and predisposing factors responsible for the persistent and unresolved conflict between herders and farmers in Benue and Nasarawa states. Climate change, fear of Islamic domination and ethnic cleansing constitute the remote conditions causing the conflict (Adebajo, 2018). While crop destruction, lack of



freshwater and green pastures, land grabbing, intra and inter ethnic rivalries among groups for political domination, corruption of the Civilian Joint Task Force, destructive activities of the migrant herdsmen, problem of land allocation by the community leaders, killing of herders, cattle rustling, discrimination of herders' mode of appearance, proliferation of weapons, indigeneship settler problem, unhealed trauma, encroachment of cattle routes (burtalis) by farmers, youth criminality, straying of cattle into farmlands, contamination of water points, increasing population and rape are the predisposing factors conducive to conflict between the two agricultural parties in the states (Adebajo, 2020; Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020). As pointed by Adogi (2013), conflict between herders and farmers is articulated along ethnicity, religion, self-determination and dynastic legitimacy. The devastating effects of the conflict attracted both national and international condemnation. The multi-dimensional nature of the conflict makes it more difficult to resolve as it has international, political, occupation, religious, intra and inter-ethnic connotations. Also, the conflict manifests as agricultural conflict which has religious dichotomy of Christianity and Islam, making it more difficult to manage and resolve. The international dimension of the conflict makes it more intractable to deal with as dangerous weapons are used in attacks and reprisal attacks by the warring parties particularly the Fulani herders who maintain close connection with other herders like the Bororo, Bokolooji and Woodabe considered to be stateless with jihadist orientation from Libya, Mali and Niger (Adebajo, 2018). The sophistication and modes of operations make the attackers more daring and invincible to apprehend. The destructibility of the conflict manifests in the unimaginable number of deaths, wanton damage to infrastructural facilities, persistent displacement of displaced people, social disarticulation, increased rate of criminality, family disintegration, mental and psychological illnesses, survival sex, disruption of socio-economic productivity, food insecurity, loss of crops and livestock affecting income generation and savings, credit repayment ability, increased maternal and child mortality due to lack of ante-natal and post-natal services in the affected parts in the two states (Adebajo, 2018; Okoro, 2018; Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020).

Government and other stakeholders such as traditional leaders, community rulers, village heads, Non-Governmental Organisations, the Civilian Joint Task Force, farmers' association, pastoralists association, religious leaders, socio-cultural organisations, among others, have intervened in managing the conflict to no avail. The conflict has become more aggravated as it has been subsumed in identity politics of indigeneship/settlership conundrum, ethnic cum tribal sentiments and pursuit of jihadist agenda. Like any other forms of conflicts that have necessitated the intervention of the civil society groups, different conflict management strategies have been adopted, yet, the situation becomes more alarming as the days pass by. Like in other conflicts in Nigeria, different conflict management mechanisms have been adopted such as negotiation, mediation, litigation, conciliation, arbitration and alternative dispute resolution. At the community level, traditional conflict management mechanisms are usually adopted in settling dispute between individuals and groups. Managing a conflict situation is to ensure that it changes from destructive one to a constructive one. It is expected that conflict management should address and eliminate violence-related actions and leaving it to be dealt with on the political level. In the case of herder-farmer conflict, suspicion abounds that lack of political will by the executive in addressing it pragmatically makes it more destructive.

Adopting traditional conflict management mechanisms for resolving conflict has been an age long practice in different parts of Africa particularly when it is related to land matters. Traditional conflict management mechanisms are created within the socio-political structure of every community and have been shaped and reshaped by the realities in every African society. As a result of lack of faith in the judiciary, due to expensive



procedures and delay in delivering judgment, traditional justice system is adopted in managing conflict particularly herder-farmer conflict. For instance, in Kenya, Somali, Ghana, Tanzania, council of elders at the community level is considered to be trustworthy and knowledgeable in the affairs of their societies. Though, traditional or customary justice systems have the benefits of participation of the community leaders, accessibility due to use of local language, consensual decision-making bringing about local reconciliation, promotion of a sense of capability and community empowerment, they can be ineffective when conflicts occur between communities with different customs and traditions, undermining the position of elders by modern changes, replacement of elders' councils and tribunals with government-appointed agencies and functionaries. Scholarly literature abounds on the roles traditional rulers in conflict resolution in Nigeria. Such include Kehinde, 2014; Maliki, Sinsin, Tokpa, & Parrot, 2019; Bwala & Ogirima, 2020; Mbih, 2020; Kwaja & Smith, 2020; Tari, 2021; Audu & Yakubu, 2022, to mention but a few .

There seems to be a paucity of scholarship assessing the conflict management mechanisms adopted by the community leaders in managing the pastoralist-farmer conflict in Benue and Nasarawa states. The rationale for the choice of Benue and Nasarawa states was informed by the fact that they are prototypical cases which are characteristic of others in Nigeria. The two states have experienced persistent pastoralist-farmer conflicts necessitating the use of various conflict management mechanisms by the community leaders in the two selected states. In order to fill the intellectual gap, the paper sought to examine the conflict management mechanisms adopted in managing pastoralist-farmer conflict in Benue and Nasarawa states. The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify and describe the different conflict management mechanisms adopted by the community leaders in resolving pastoralist-farmer conflict in Benue and Nasarawa states.
2. Investigate and explain the factors behind the failure of the conflict management mechanisms adopted by the community leaders in the two states.

Literature Review

Conflict Management and Pastoralist-farmer Conflicts in Nigeria

To start with, conflict management does not lend itself to a generally acceptable conception, scholars have conceptualised it from different points of view based on academic and ideological inclinations. In framing it, Hamad (2005) opined that conflict management as a concept in peace and conflict studies include many phenomena apart from settlement of disputes and solving of problems and it engages approaches such as conflict containment, conflict resolution and transformation and that it is a single field which includes description, understanding, prediction and participation in part or through comprehensive, interim or permanent solutions. Pia & Diez (2007) posited that conflict management promotes intervention to achieve political settlements mostly by those who have power to exercise pressure on the conflicting parties in order to induce them to settle. Conflict management deals with addressing how conflict will be managed instead of eliminating it, which involves bringing opposing sides together in a cooperative way or process, designing a practical, achievable and cooperative system for maintaining differences among them (Adebajo, 2018). Studies abound on the management of pastoralist-farmer conflict in West Africa and Nigeria particularly using different analytical, theoretical and methodological prisms (Kehinde, 2014; Ikezue & Ezeah, 2017; Mohammed, Umar, & Hamisu, 2017; Chikaire, Ajaero, Ibe, & Onogu, 2018; Maliki et al., 2019; Bwala & Ogirima, 2020; Mbih, 2020; Tari, 2021; Audu & Yakubu, 2022).



As argued by Ikezue & Ezeah (2017), the traditional methods of conflict management had been used in the time past even before colonialism in Africa and are better than the present mechanisms used in managing conflict. Arguing further, they believed that the main thrust of using the traditional method of conflict management was to get to the root of the conflict so as to resolve it amicably when it has not escalated. Chikaire et al. (2018) asserted that the institutional mechanisms involved in managing herder–farmer conflict in Nigeria, particularly in Imo state, are the traditional rulers, religious leaders, town unions, Miyetti Allah, police, courts, military and local government. However, the two warring groups still prefer the use of arbitration but because of their desire to preserve relationships, they rather choose informal approach of settlement instead of going to court or police station. Still on the conflict management mechanisms adopted in Imo state, Chikaire et al. (2018) averred that peace committees, dialogue, mediation, accommodation, avoidance, amiable distribution of resources, mediation, compensation, law enforcement agents and traditional rulers have been employed. However, lack of fund to maintain conflict management committee, lack of constitutional power by the peace committees, ignorance, division among the committee members, refusal to pay compensation by offending parties, lack of regard for the conflict management team, corrupt nature of the community/nomad leaders, uncontrollable attitude by the youths, among others, constitute challenges to the success of conflict management mechanisms and institutions involved. Maliki et al. (2019) asserted that farmer–herder agro–pastoral conflict management is a permanent training process involving confidence, negotiation, conciliation in Burkina Fasso, Nigeria, Mali, Somali, Tchad, Zimbabwe and Mali. Noting further, Maliki et al. (2019) argued that the factors that determine the success of the conflict management mechanisms adopted include availability of fodder, respect for transhumance corridors, functional local committee directed by people of influence and communication within the interest groups.

Nextier SPD (2021) argued that the conflict management mechanism adopted by the government in Nigeria to resolve the conflict between herders and farmers are reactionary without any positive results, for instance, the adoption of ten–year national livestock transformation plan by the federal government failed due to lack of trust between the two parties as herders felt that ranches and grazing reserves might not be useful for their herding system. Contrarily, the farmers believed that the initiative was put in place to take over their land. Nextier SPD (2021) further averred that the civil society organisations and other international development actors have been involved in the implementation of programmes that would allow peaceful co–existence between the two parties, however, they failed because the measures were community–based conflict management mechanisms that did not consider the economic and climatic factors that cause the conflict in the first place. In the opinion of Kehinde (2014), the formal conflict management mechanisms used in managing herder–farmer conflicts in Nigeria, though, specialised and neutral, are time wasting when cases between the two agricultural groups are taken to the police or court for litigation, hence, failed to effectively manage the conflict. Although Kehinde (2014) examined the roles played by the traditional rulers, police and court yielding different outcomes, the conflict management mechanisms employed by the community leaders was significantly missing in his analysis. In the study carried out by Mohammed et al. (2017) in examining the roles played by the traditional institutions in managing the conflict in Borno state, it was argued that traditional institutions played a significant role in managing the conflict, hence, a larger percentage of the respondents agreed that it was a satisfactory measure. However, the author did not specifically examine the roles of the community leaders vis–a–vis the conflict management mechanisms adopted, as the conflict occurs at the community level. In their perspective, Bwala &



Ogirima (2020) from the herders' perception argued that the traditional institutions, police, local authorities, courts, compensation and cattle breeders association engaged in managing herder-farmer conflicts, without success, hence, the conflict defies any applicable solution. In a contrary opinion, Tari (2021) assessing conflict management mechanisms deployed in herder-farmer conflict in the North Central Nigeria argued that peace building structure achieved success in terms of dialogue, mediation, psycho-social and traumatic healing among the conflicting parties. Tari (2021) alluded to the fact that both herders and farmers were frustrated by court processes therefore taking laws into their hands. Consequently, the conflict management mechanisms of arrest, detention, prosecution and conviction of offenders did not serve as deterrence to the herders.

Audu & Yakubu (2022) posited that the Nigerian state management of the resource conflict between herders and farmers had involved the use of mechanisms of creation of grazing reserves, national commission for nomadic education, deployment of security agents, comprehensive livestock development plan, the Great Green Wall initiatives, national livestock transformation plan, the Rural Grazing Area Policy (RUGA), cattle colony and open grazing prohibition law, yet, none has been successful in in stemming the tide of herder-farmer conflict. However, lack of political will by the government leaders at all levels, politicisation of the conflict and the elite interest. Further arguing, Audu & Yakubu (2022) noted that government strategy of deployment of security agents constitute a hindrance in managing the conflict due to gross human rights violations. It is important to state that though exhaustive in its analysis, the paper did not interrogate the roles of individual actors at the community level, particularly the community leaders who are saddled with the responsibility of maintaining law and order, and sustaining peace at the local communities. Gleaning through the aforementioned literature, it is observed that though they captured different roles played by various traditional institutional arrangements and conflict management mechanisms adopted in herder-farmer conflict, however, the roles played by the community leaders, conflict management mechanisms employed and their success seems to lack academic investigation. Hence, this constitutes the intellectual gap which the paper explored.

Theoretical Framework

The conflict transformation theory is adopted to anchor the paper. As an analytical framework, it draws its basic ideas from the works of Krippendorff (1973) and Galtung (1996). In contributing to the conflict transformation theory, Krippendorff (1973) opined that conflicts are connected to deeper structures in society, both at national and international levels. Therefore, smaller conflicts and larger conflicts in turn were rooted in the structure of the world society and international economy (Ercoşkun, 2021). From the perspective of Galtung, conflicts can be destructive in nature because of contradictions found in the society which can be manifested in behavior and attitudes of individuals. Galtung further posited that conflicts have life-affirming and life destroying aspects and are a result of contractions in the structure of society which manifests in attitudes and behaviours. To him, conflict undergo a variety of transformational processes including articulation or disarticulation, conscientisation or de-consentisation, complexification or simplification, polarisation or de-polarisation, escalation or de-escalation. The incompatibility that may arise between parties can be eliminated by transcending the contradictions by compromise, deepening or widening the conflict structure and associating or dissociating the actors (Miall, 2004). Curle (1971) in his contribution to conflict transformation theory asserted that unequal relationships can be transformed through the process of conscientisation, negotiation and development. Lederach (2000) proposed that conflict transformation deals with the way conflict emerges



and evolves and how it can bring changes in the personal, relational, structural and cultural levels for the interventionists to promote peaceful change through non-violent means. To the exponents, conflict transformation involves actions that seek to alter the characteristics and manifestations of conflict by addressing the root causes of the a conflict over the long term in order to transform negative ways of dealing with conflict into positive constructie ways (Ercoskun, 2021).

Conflict transformation takes place at the emotional, personal, perceptual and spiritual aspects to ensure change. Conflict transformation involves context transformation, structural transformation, actor transformation and personal transformation. Context transformation involves changes in the context of conflict that may radically alter each party's perception of the conflict situation as well as their motives. This includes transformation of actions, issues, incompatible goals and relationships, economy, state and society within which the conflict is embedded. Actor transformation deals with change in the parties or appearance of the new parties. In any conflict situation there are groups involved, whether primary and secondary. Transformation needs to occur in the positions the parties take on issues causing the conflict and the way parties redefine the positions in order to reach compromises. Personal transformation encourages change in attitude, memory, behavior and relations of persons involved in the conflict. This has to do with change of heart of individual leaders or groups so that relationship can improve among the parties involved in the conflict. For conflict to be transformed, there is need to engage not only human beings but also the deployment of material resources in order to change a conflict situation is necessary. Conflict transformation theory widens views on the conflict, conflicting parties and necessity of drawing peace building resources from the wider society. The resources for building peace also include different stakeholders in the society which can include the community leaders, Non-Governmental Organisations among others. The theory is adopted as explanatory framework because it advocates for drawing peace building resources from the macro and meso levels of society including formal and informal stakeholders. Community leaders are the informal stakeholders at the rural level where pastoralist-farmer conflict is most prevalent is worthy of investigation in order to critically examine the conflict management mechanisms adopted by them and why success resolving the conflict is still elusive. This will inform the policy and practical implication on how the conflict can be drastically reduced to the bearest minimum if not completely eradicated. In addition, conflict transformation takes a point of departure from traditional approaches to conflict resolution which recognizes and engages only the parties to a conflict. For a conflict to be transformed, community leaders are to play profound roles of initiating resolution for peace and its sustainability.

Research Methods

Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized in eliciting information. The primary data were collected from the Non-Governmental Organisations' officials, community leaders, farmers, pastoralists and law enforcement agents. A self-constructed and validated questionnaire was used to collect data from the community leaders, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) officials, farmers, herders, security agents and displaced people. The four-point Likert rating scale of strongly agree, agree, strong disagree and disagree were adopted in guiding the respondents' selection of appropriate options. A validated questionnaire (75 copies) was administered in the two states totaling one hundred and fifty copies (150). That is, seventy five copies of questionnnaire were administered in Benue state while another seventy five copies of questionnaire were also administered in Nasarawa state totaling one hundred and fifty



copies (150) in all. A total number of one hundred and thirty five copies of questionnaire was retrieved in both in Benue and Nasarawa states. That is 73 copies were retrieved out of 75 copies administered in Benue state and 62 copies were retrieved out of 75 copies in Nasarawa state. The retrieval rate was 90% and the reason for the high rate was because the copies of questionnaire were collected back immediately after the respondents filled them. The copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researcher. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as simple percentages because the study did not set out to test any variable or hypothesis. In-depth interviews were conducted with farmers, pastoralists, community leaders, Non-Governmental Organisations officials and law enforcement agents by the researcher with the assistance of two interpreters. The criteria considered for the selection of the interviewees included occupation and experience. Occupation was used as a criterion in selecting the participants because basically the conflict is an occupational one between two agricultural parties (herders and farmers) fighting for socio-economic existence and preservation. Also, experience was considered as a criterion in order to obtain first hand and ample information from the participants who have knowledge about the subject matter being investigated. In conducting the in-depth interview, English language which was translated to Tiv and Hausa languages by two interpreters was employed. The interpreters spoke Tiv with the farmers and Hausa language with the pastoralists. A total number of ten in-depth interviews were conducted in the two states. The reason for adopting in-depth interview was to ask probing questions in order to have deeper understanding on the conflict management mechanisms adopted by the community leaders, their effectiveness and constraints. Referral method was employed to access the participants of the interviewees. The interviews were transcribed and content-analysed. All data got from the in-depth interview were grouped under different categories called themes generated in line with the research objectives. There is no study that does encounter one limitation or the other in the process of execution, this study is experienced such. The first limitation in obtaining data had to do with getting access to the pastoralists who were hostile and skeptical initially because of the sensitivity of the subject matter. For instance, a Fulani pastoralist was very hostile and declined to be interviewed in Kurape village in Nasarawa state when he was approached. But for the other pastoralists, their fears were allayed through the interpreter and audience was granted. In addition, travelling to the riverine communities in boats in River Benue was initially scary. The interpreter from the community allayed the fear of the researcher in accessing the community leaders in Thombo, Logo local government area in Benue state. Despite the challenges encountered during data collection, they were surmounted because of the desire to achieve results coupled with the cooperation of the interpreters.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Conflict Management Strategies Adopted by the Community Leaders in Managing Pastoralist-farmer Conflict in Benue and Nasarawa States

Research Question One: What are the conflict management strategies adopted by community leaders in managing pastoralist-farmer conflict in Benue and Nasarawa states?

**Table 1** This Subsection Presents and Analyses Data on the Conflict Management Strategies Adopted by Community Leaders in Managing Pastoralist–farmer Conflict in Benue and Nasarawa States

S/NO	Research Items	SA	A	SD	D
1	Dialogue was initiated by community leaders in managing the conflict.	50 (37.03%)	25 (18.5%)	25 (18.5%)	35 (25.9%)
2	Village committee system was adopted by the community leaders.	75 (55.6%)	15 (11%)	22 (16.3%)	23 (17%)
3	Negotiation was used by the community leaders.	79 (58.5%)	18 (13%)	30 (22%)	9 (6.6%)
4	Traditional court system.	60 (45.18%)	18 (13.33%)	25 (18.51%)	32 (23.70%)
5	Local security actors such as vigilante group, were used in managing the conflict.	97 (71.9%)	22 (16.3%)	9 (6.6%)	7 (5.18%)
6	Courts and tribunals were used in managing the conflict in the two states.	30 (22%)	23 (17.03%)	70 (51.85%)	12 (8.88%)
7	Security agents were deployed as a means of managing the conflict in your community.	99 (73%)	12 (8.8%)	13 (9.6%)	11 (8%)
8	Compensation was applied as a strategy of managing the conflict in your community.	55 (40.7%)	23 (17%)	33 (24%)	24 (17.7%)
9	Civilian Joint Task Force was deployed in curbing the conflict.	84 (62.2%)	19 (14.1%)	15 (11%)	17 (12.6%)

As presented in Table 1, 55.5% felt that dialogue was used as a conflict management strategy by the community leaders in the two states. While 44.43% of the respondents felt that dialogue was not used in managing the conflict by the community leaders. A little over 66% thought that village committee system was in use by the community leaders to manage the conflict. It can be depicted that involvement of the village heads goes a long way in stemming the tide of the conflict in the affected areas. More importantly their involvement is very necessary because the conflict occurs in their domains. Over 33% thought that village committee system was not in use in bringing the two warring parties together for resolution. The implication of the opinion of the minority who thought village committee system was not in use is that they might be unaware or have not heard about its use in their communities. Over 71% believed that negotiation was used as a strategy to manage the conflict by the community leaders. Warring parties can initiate negotiation if means of communication have not broken down completely. Likewise, the community leaders can negotiate on behalf of the warring parties, but because they lack power to enforce decisions, they might not be carried out. However, it may stem the tide of the conflict but cannot adequately resolve it. Close to 30% disagreed that negotiation was used as a means of managing the conflict.

About 60% thought that traditional court system was adopted by the community leaders in mitigating the conflict between the two agricultural groups. While a little over 42% felt that the traditional court system was not used. Over 88% perceived that the local security actors were employed in managing the conflict. On the other hand, close to 12% disagreed that local security actors were involved in managing the conflict in the affected areas. On the adoption of the court and tribunals, over 39% believed that they were used as a mechanism for managing the conflict. The implication of this perception is that courts and tribunals are not readily used in managing the conflict between herders and farmers. It can be deduced that both parties and



mediators may prefer customary conflict resolution process to litigation, possibly because of the inherent challenges associated with them. Over 82% thought that security agents were deployed in the communities to curb the conflict. Most of the time when conflict escalates and the tolls are high on people, government deploys security agents in order to restore normalcy in the affected environment. 76.29% responded that the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) was employed in managing the conflict by the community leaders. Deployment of CJTF has complemented the efforts of the security agents. Meanwhile, 23.7% did not think that the CJTF was used in managing the conflict. 58% felt that compensation was used to settle the conflict. It is deducible that herders and farmers see compensation as a useful tool to be adopted particularly when the cattle destroy crops. Also when farmers kill cattle, the herders can be compensated. The question that begs for an answer is how often do the parties pay compensation for any damages done when charged to do so? If adequate compensation was paid by any of the parties and it is commensurate to the damages done, should that lead to any violent conflicts if there are no underlying issues? Invariably, the responses to the questions may not be in the affirmative.

The opinions expressed by some of the interviewees corroborated the perceptions of the respondents. Findings from the interviews revealed that dialogue, village committee system, negotiation, local security actors, deployment of security agents, compensation and Civilian Joint Task Force were used in managing the conflict in the two states. The findings corroborate the opinions of Chikaire et al. (2018), and Bwala & Ogirima (2020) on the institutions and mechanisms employed in managing herder-farmer conflicts. The community leaders interviewed maintained that farmers and herders on many occasions used dialogue as initiated by them in managing the conflict. A community leader in Nasarawa state pointed out that dialogue between the two parties helped a lot in stemming the tide of the conflict in the state. Noting further, he mentioned that there were instances in which dialogue did not work out as an interventionist approach because the parties would not uphold the agreement on non-encroachment of either farmland or cattle route. Negligence of the warring parties on the agreement has caused conflict several times because the offender failed to pay compensation due to either lack of money or unwillingness to do so. Revealing further, the community leaders pointed out that farmers do not always have money when they kill cows because of the huge amount involved. Hence, the herders launched revenge attacks. Attacks and counter-attacks further exacerbated the conflict situation causing greater damage to lives and property.

The community leaders engaged in managing the conflict due to the fact that they are recognized as the custodians of the cultural norms and values guiding the communities. So, they become the first point of call when issues arise in their domains. It was revealed by the community leaders in Kurape village in Nasarawa state during an interview that village committee system was used. According to him, the village committee system helps them in arresting any brewing conflict before eruption into a large scale. The village heads are in charge of the village councils with elders drawn from different households on the basis of age, knowledge of culture, experience in resolving conflict and integrity. The community leader further revealed that any village head that shirks his responsibility by allowing conflict to erupt will be sanctioned accordingly by the traditional ruler in the district. As regards managing pastoralist-farmer conflict, most issues of crop destruction by cattle are handled by the village committee system. Issues that are difficult to manage by the village heads are referred to the traditional rulers. For instance, issues of rape committed by the herders are usually referred to the traditional rulers to handle which might later be transferred to the police to investigate. It is noteworthy to state that adequate handling of cases of rape by the traditional ruler or police may not serve the purpose of justice to the



victim because it is usually treated with levity. In order to avoid stigmatization, victims of rape in the communities by the herders do not readily come out to complain because of shame and psychological trauma they face.

As found out during the interview, local security actors also engaged by the community leaders in ensuring there is peace and order in the communities. The local hunters, and vigilante groups play crucial roles at the community level to complement the efforts of the security agents in preventing attacks and counter-attacks. However, they are constrained to perform effectively. It was also revealed that court and tribunals were used which confirms the view of Tari (2021) who argued that the court procedures are used by both herders and farmers leading them to take laws into their hands. Therefore, the arrest, detention, prosecution and conviction of offenders did not deter the pastoralists. The opinion negates the major views of the respondents that court and tribunals were not adopted by the community leaders. One of the methods adopted by Nigerian government is to set up investigative panels to find out the causes of a particular conflict. Such was done in the two states to investigate the reasons for the incessant conflict between the two agricultural groups and how it can be resolved. The problem with the use of panels is that most of the recommendations submitted to the government are not implemented.

Research Question Two: What are the factors affecting the success of the conflict management mechanisms adopted by community leaders managing pastoralist–farmer conflict in Benue and Nasarawa states?

Table 2 The Factors Affecting the Success of the Conflict Management Mechanisms Adopted by the Community Leaders in Benue and Nasarawa States

S/NO	Research Items	SA	A	SD	D
1	Lack of capacity to enforce binding decisions by community leaders affects their roles as mediators.	83 (61.5%)	38 (28.1%)	6 (4%)	8 (6%)
2	Partiality by the community leaders affects their roles in managing the conflict.	17 (12.6%)	18 (13.3%)	83 (61.5%)	38 (28.1%)
3	Erosion of power of community leaders constrains managing the conflict effectively.	67 (49.6%)	16 (11.8%)	34 (25.2%)	18 (13.3%)
4	Extortion by community leaders affects effective management of the conflict.	59 (43.7%)	53 (39.3%)	17 (12.3%)	6 (4.4%)
5	Discrimination of the herders by the community leaders affects the conflict management processes.	72 (53.3%)	25 (18.5%)	27 (20%)	11 (8.1%)
6	Avoidance of dialogue by the herders stifles managing the conflict by the community leaders.	19 (14.1%)	24 (17.8%)	61 (45.2%)	31 (22.9%)
7	Communication barrier constitutes a hindrance to the community leaders in managing the conflict.	98 (72.4%)	26 (19.3%)	06 (4.44%)	05 (3.7%)
8	Non-payment of compensation by the conflict parties mars the process of managing the conflict.	87 (64.4%)	26 (19.3%)	09 (6.7%)	13 (9.6%)
9	Poor conflict management skills is a barrier to effectively resolve the conflict by the community leaders.	69 (51.1%)	54 (40%)	14 (10.37%)	08 (5.9%)
10	Human rights abuses mar the use of security agents in managing the conflict.	75 (55.6%)	19 (14.1%)	16 (11.9%)	25 (18.5%)
11	Use of Civilian Joint Task Force by the community leaders helps in managing the conflict.	13 (9.6%)	11 (8.1%)	66 (48.9%)	45 (33.33%)

As presented in Table 2, over 60% felt that lack of capacity to enforce binding decisions by community leaders affect their mediatory roles in managing pastoralist–farmer conflict in the two states. Close to 40%



believed that lack of capacity to enforce binding decisions by community leaders affects management of the conflict. Over 80% thought that partiality by the community leaders is a constraint to effective management of the conflict. It can be deduced that community leaders display partiality towards one of the conflict parties (farmers), possibly because of ethnic, religious and indigenous affinity. When a mediatory team shows non-neutrality, it tends to affect the peaceful resolution of a conflict. Close to 26% believed that partiality does not affect the mediatory role by the community leaders. Close to 62% thought erosion of the powers of the community leaders affects their effective delivery in managing the conflict. While close to 39% felt that erosion of powers of the community leaders does not affect the resolution of the conflict. Meanwhile, over 82% perceived that extortion by the community leaders affects management of the conflict by the community leaders. It can be deduced, mediators can mar the process as a result of selfish interest and non-neutrality. Extorting one of the parties to the conflict jeopardises the process. A little over 28% felt that extortion by community leaders is not a constraint. Over 72% perceived that discrimination of the herders affect the management of the conflict. Close to 32% of the respondents agreed that avoidance of dialogue by the pastoralists constitute a barrier to managing the conflict effectively by the community leaders. If a party does not show up for a dialogue in order to discuss the underlying causes of the conflict and design steps to move out of the situation, it becomes difficult to resolve. While over 70% felt that avoidance of dialogue by herders does not constitute a constraint to the management of the conflict. Close to 90% agreed that communication barrier between the mediators and conflicting parties is a constraint to managing the conflict by the community leaders. A little over 8% did not believe that communication is a barrier on the part of the mediators and the conflicting parties, whether farmers or pastoralists. A little over 83% thought that non-payment of compensation levied on the parties to the conflict is a factor affecting the resolution of the conflict. While a minority (16.28%) of the respondents felt that non-payment of compensation does not affect the management of the conflict between herders and farmers in the two states. Further, majority (91%) felt that poor conflict management skills by the community leaders is a constraint to the resolution of the conflict. It can be inferred that if actors managing a conflict do not possess the necessary skills in conflict management styles, it will definitely affect the effective outcome of the process. Meanwhile, 16.27% of the respondents had a contrary perception that the community leaders have poor management skills which can constitute a challenge to effective conflict resolution. Majority (70%) of the respondents perceived that use of security agents was marred by human rights abuses. Though, it is the last resort adopted by the central government when a conflict has escalated, whether with the invitation by the community leaders or not, the acts of human rights abuses perpetrated can be devastating. 30.36% thought that human rights abuses do not mar the use of security agents in managing the conflict.

The opinion of the interviewees also corroborated the perception of the respondents on the constraints affecting the success of the conflict management strategies adopted in managing the conflict. The interviewees believed that lack of capacity to enforce binding decisions which is characteristic of mediation is a constraint to the community leaders in effectively managing the conflict. For instance, one of the Non-Governmental Organisations officials pointed out that lack of mediatory skills by the community leaders, non-inclusion or poor representation of the victims of the conflict particularly displaced persons makes the process deficient in procedure. It was also revealed by one of the farmers that negotiation did not work in resolving the conflict because they would not want to enter into any agreement on how the pastoralists would take over their lands.



One of the community leaders cited an instance when a meeting was called by one of the traditional rulers with community leaders, farmers and the representatives of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN) in Benue in 2014, the agreement reached has since broken down, rather than peace to reign, the conflict lingers. A pastoralist interviewed in Nasarawa state said that negotiation as a tool for managing pastoralist-farmer conflict is not effective because of the corrupt practices of the community leaders who would collect money from the pastoralists before allocating land for grazing. One of the Non-Governmental Organisations officials revealed that mediation as a conflict management process adopted by the community leaders has not been effective. It was also found out that erosion of authority of the community leaders affect the process due to extortion which makes it impossible for them to maintain traditional integrity expected of them. This constitutes a limitation on the role of the community leaders in managing the conflict between the two agricultural groups. Majority of the interviewees pointed out that use of security agents in managing the conflict has not been effective because of varying degree of human rights violations committed in the course of their operation. According to them, there were arbitrary arrests, torturing, maiming, killing and detention of innocent people. However, the presence of the security agents was able to reduce intensity of attacks and counter-attacks. The findings are in consonance with the assertion of Audu & Yakubu (2022) that the deployment of security agents by the Nigerian government constitutes a hindrance to the success of the conflict management.

Conclusion

The paper investigated the roles of community leaders in managing the pastoralist-farmer conflict in Benue and Nasarawa states. It concluded that the community leaders play crucial roles in managing the conflict. Several conflict management mechanisms such as negotiation, mediation, village committee system, traditional conflict management system, among others, were used by the community leaders. However, the mechanisms adopted in managing the conflict are not effective in adequately resolving the incessant conflicts between pastoralists and farmers. Also, lack of adequate skills in conflict management and capacity to enforce decisions, partiality, erosion of authority, extortion, among others, constrain the community leaders in managing the conflict effectively. The following recommendations are put forward to ensure that the community leaders perform maximally in ensuring peaceful resolution of the conflict. Community leaders need to be trained in acquiring skills in conflict management which can be undertaken by professional conflict managers who are experts in the field. Partiality and extortion exhibited by the community leaders should be heavily sanctioned by the traditional rulers in order to curb the bad attitudes that erode traditional integrity and trust people have in them. Local security actors such as vigilante groups and Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) should be equipped with modern tools and incentives to boost their productivity in security provisioning. It is therefore recommended that the community leaders need to be trained in acquiring skills in conflict management which can be undertaken by professional conflict managers who are experts in the field. Partiality and extortion exhibited by the community leaders should be heavily sanctioned by the traditional rulers in order to curb the bad attitudes that erode traditional integrity and trust people have in them. Local security actors such as vigilante groups and Civilian Joint Task Force should be equipped with modern tools and incentives to boost their productivity in security provisioning. It is noteworthy to state that further researches can be carried out to examine the roles of security agents and vigilante groups in managing pastoralist-farmer conflict in the two states. Also, the impact of conflict compradors in aggravating the conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in Nigeria is worthy of interrogation.



References

- Adebajo, A. A. (2018). *Pastoralist-farmer Conflict Management and Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Benue and Nasarawa States, Nigeria* (Master's thesis). Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State.
- Adebajo, A. A. (2020). Religious and External Dimension of Pastoralist-farmer Conflict in the North Central Nigeria. *FUDMA Journal of Politics and International Affairs (FUJOPIA)*, 3(1), 92-105.
- Adebajo, A. A., & Iseoluwa, R. O. (2020). Climate Change, Resource Scarcity and Pastoralist-farmer Conflict in North Central Nigeria. *Jalingo Journal of Social and Management Sciences*, 2(3), 23-38.
- Adogi, M. (2013). *Fulani-farmers Conflicts in Nasarawa State: The Ecology, Population and Politics*. Abuja: Murry Greens Consult.
- Audu, Y. A., & Yakubu, U. A. (2022). Interrogating the Challenges of Managing Resource Conflict between Herders and Farmers in Nigeria. *Zamfara Journal of Politics and Development*, 3(1), 1-15. Retrieved from <https://zjpd.com.ng/index.php/zjpd/article/view/77>
- Bwala, M. A., & Ogirima, A. (2020). Conflict in Nigeria's Agricultural Community; The Herders' Perspective in North Central Nigeria. *Journal of Agribusiness and Rural Development*, 56(2), 163-172. <http://doi.org/10.17306/J.JARD.2020.01272>
- Chikaire, J. U., Ajaero, J. O., Ibe, M. N., & Onogu, B. (2018). Status in Institutional Arrangements for Managing Resource Use Conflicts among Crop Farmers and Pastoralists in Imo State, Nigeria. *Agricultural Research & Technology*, 19(1), 556077. <http://doi.org/10.19080/ARTOAJ.2018.19.556077>
- Curle, A. (1971). *Making Peace*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Ercoskun, B. (2021). On Galtung's Approach to Peace Studies. *Lectio Socialis*, 5(1), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.47478/lectio.792847>
- Galtung, J. (1996). *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*. London: Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446221631>
- Hamad, A. A. (2005). The Reconceptualisation of Conflict Management. *Peace, Conflict and Development: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 7, 22-37. Retrieved from <http://www.ahmadazem.com/alazem/books/144/reconceptualisation/>
- Ikezue, C. E., & Ezeah, P. (2017). Recurrent Conflicts among Migrant Fulani Herdsmen and Indigenous Communities of Southern Nigeria: A Review of Literature. *International Journal of Health and Social Inquiry*, 3(1), 152-169. Retrieved from <https://journals.aphriapub.com/index.php/IJHSI/article/view/331>
- Kehinde, E. A. (2014). Conflict Management Strategies to Reduce Consequences on Livelihoods of Fulani Cattle Herders and Farmers in Kabba - Bunu, Kogi State, Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Rural Sociology*, 14(2), 15-21. Retrieved from <https://ideas.repec.org/a/ags/ngnjrs/287170.html>



Krippendorff, E. (1973). Peace Research and the Industrial Revolution. *Journal of Peace Research*, 10(3), 185–201. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/422771>

Kwaja, C. M. A., & Smith, K. (2020). *Transnational Dimensions of Conflict between Farmers and Herders in the Western Sahel and Lake Chad Basin*. Washington DC: Search for Common Ground. Retrieved from https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SFCG_Policy_Brief_Transnational_Dimension_to_FH_Conflicts.pdf

Lederach, J. P. (2000). Journey from Resolution to Transformative Peacebuilding. In C. Sampson, & J. P. Lederach (Eds.), *From the Ground Up: Mennonite Contributions to International Peacebuilding* (pp. 45–55). New York: Oxford University Press.

Maliki, R., Sinsin, B., Tokpa, C., & Parrot, L. (2019). Farmers–herders’ Conflict Management for Sustainable Agro–pastoral Land Use in the Guinea–Sudan Zone. *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 155(1), 94–114. Retrieved from https://www.europeanjournalofscientificresearch.com/issues/PDF/EJSR_155_1_08.pdf

Mbih, R. A. (2020). The Politics of Farmer–herder Conflicts and Alternative Conflict Management in Northwest Cameroon. *African Geographical Review*, 32(4), 324–344. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19376812.2020.1720755>

Miall, H. (2004). Conflict Transformation: A Multi–Dimensional Task. In A. Austin, M. Fischer, & N. Ropers (Eds.), *Transforming Ethnopolitical Conflict: The Berghof Handbook* (pp. 67–89). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-663-05642-3_4

Mohammed, M. M., Umar, B. F., & Hamisu, S. (2017). *Farmer–herder Conflict Management: The Role of Traditional Institutions in Borno State, Nigeria*. Republic of Moldova: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing.

Nextier SPD. (2021). *Resolving Farmer–herder Conflicts*. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/resolving-farmer-herder-conflicts>

Okoro, J. P. (2018). Herdsmen/Farmers Conflict and Its Effects on Socio–economic Development in Nigeria. *Journal of Peace, Security, and Development*, 4(1), 143–158

Pia, E., & Diez, T. (2007). Conflict and Human Rights: A Theoretical Framework. In *SHUR: Human Rights in Conflicts: The Role of Civil Society, a STREP Project Funded by the EU60th Framework Programme* (SHUR WP 1/07). Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/28224991/SHUR_Working_Paper_Series_Conflict_and_Human_Rights_A_Theoretical_Framework

Tari, V. A. (2021). Dissecting Management Strategies of Farmer–herder Conflict in Selected Vulnerable States in North–central Nigeria. *Gusau International Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 4(2), 276–300. Retrieved from <https://gijmss.com.ng/index.php/gijmss/article/view/66>

Ugwu, A. C., & Enna, D. M. (2015). Conflict Transformation in Nasarawa State: The Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Option. *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration*, 3(3), 58–73. Retrieved from <https://www.eajournals.org/journals/global-journal-of-political-science-and-administration-gjpsa/vol-3issue-3-june-2015/conflict-transformation-in-nasarawa-state-the-alternative-dispute-resolution-adr-option/>