



## **Influence of Traditional Institutions in Farmer-herder Conflicts Management in Borno State, Nigeria**

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### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author MMM designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors HS and BUF managed the analyses of the study. Author MMM managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study was conducted to assess the influence of traditional institutions in Farmer-Herder conflicts management in three selected Local Government Areas (Damboa, Jere and Magumeri LGAs) of Borno state, Nigeria. Mutistage sampling technique was used to select 225 sample size respondents which include farmers (150) and herders (75) respectively. A structured questionnaire and interview schedule were used to collect data for this study which was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) and PRA (Pair wise Ranking) tool. The results revealed that (89.3%) of the respondents are of the opinion that, the most preferred strategies for managing conflicts between farmers and herders in the study area are the traditional institutions. Results in Table 2 shows that the farmers ranked the resolution of conflict through the payment of compensation as the first while the herders (Table 3) ranked it second. However, the study

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recommend that the traditional rulers in conjunction with all the stakeholders at the village level should maintain routine or annual meetings with farmers and herders for the avoidance of conflict between the farmers and herders in the area. Also, traditional institutions should be strengthened through constitutional amendment, thus, to return their power to adjudicate conflict in the rural areas which had been taken away by the 1976 Local Government Reform.

*Keywords: Influence; traditional; institutions; farmer-herder; conflicts; management.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Farmer-herder relationship used to be cordial in the past, many elders of farmers and herders of today grew up together in the same areas, enjoyed a peaceful and harmonious social and economic relationship and conflicts were rare [1,2,3]. According to [4], conflict is that form of social interaction in which the actors seek to obtain scarce resources by eliminating or weakening their contenders.

Historically, methods used to settle disputes have ranged from negotiation, to courtroom litigation, and even to physical combat. However, it is more advantageous to reach practical and private agreements that are attainable through the traditional methods of conflict arbitration than to fight for years and spend huge amounts of money in courtroom battles [5]. By traditional institutions, we refer to the indigenous political arrangements whereby leaders with proven track records are appointed and installed in line with the provisions of their native laws and customs [6]. Traditional rulers possess accurate local knowledge going back many years and may also have good networks of communication with the grassroots through titleholders [7].

Traditional institutions' nature of conflicts resolutions are relatively informal, time-proven social system geared towards reconciliation, maintenance and improvement of the social relationship [8]. Their involvements in conflict resolution play a very significant role in the day-to-day lives of Africans [9], they are more accountable and responsible than any other group (like police, military or court) and are the only authorities to take preventive action [10]. Conflicts are usually resolved based on the customs and traditions of the people. The traditional institutions have different approaches to conflict management and resolution, depending on the community. What is suitable in one community may not in another [11]. Agrees with this position when he argued that traditional approaches vary considerably from society to

society, from region to region, from community to community. He further affirms that, there are as many different traditional approaches to conflict transformation as there are different societies and communities with a specific history, a specific culture and specific custom even in the South, just like any other. He added that, traditional approaches are always context specific and are not universally applicable as modern or conventional methods are. Some take action to set up court-like procedures, with witnesses, site inspection and independent assessment of costs and others, and make arbitrary judgments [12]. They have played a significant role in the peace conferences following civil disorders that are semi-permanent features of the political landscape in Nigeria [7].

Borno State has recorded a number of farmer-herder conflicts in recent times with devastating consequences on lives and properties in many communities across the state. It has been reported by many authors such as [13,14,15] that, almost all forms of violent conflicts have direct or indirect effects on crop and livestock production in the affected areas. This study was therefore, focuses on the influence of traditional institutions in managing farmer-herder conflicts in Borno state, Nigeria.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Borno State lies in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria between Latitudes  $10^{\circ} 30'$  and  $13^{\circ} 50'$  North and Longitudes  $11^{\circ}$  and  $13^{\circ} 45'$  East which occupies an area of 69,435 sq km [16]. The State has a projected population of 5,450,236 people for the year 2014. The annual rainfall of the State varies between 300 mm and 900 mm and the length of rainy season is between 80 - 160 days [12].

A multistage sampling technique was used for this study. In the first stage, three Local Government Areas (Damboa, Jere and Magumeri LGAs) were purposively selected based on the frequency of documented

occurrence of farmer-herder conflicts [17], and their relative peace from Boko Haram insurgency. Five villages were then purposively selected in each of the three LGAs based on the same ground, making a total of 15 villages. The villages are Abulitu, Alimiri, Iya, Kafa and Nzuda from Damboa Local Government Area; Dusman, Wodiya, Bwale, Kolori and Zabarmari from Jere LGA and Ardoram, Furam, Dongo, Ngamma and Borno-Yesu were selected from Magumeri LGA. Ten (10) crop farmers and five (5) herders were purposively selected from each of the 15 villages. Finally, this gave a sample size of 225 respondents, that is, 150 crop farmers and 75 herders.

However, secondary data were collected from printed materials such as textbooks, journals, proceedings, theses etc. Whereby, primary data was collected from a structured questionnaire and interview schedule. Descriptive statistics (frequency distributions and percentages) and PRA (Pair wise ranking) were used to analyze the data generated for this study.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1 Institutions Involved in Farmer-herder Conflicts Management**

Results in Table 1 show that (89.3%) of the respondents were of the opinion that, the most preferred strategies for managing conflicts between farmers and herders in the study area were the traditional institutions. About half (52%) of the respondents were of the view that legal courts of law were their most preferred whenever conflict occurs among them. The police was the third option for both farmers and herders which constituted (28.7%) and (34.7%) respectively. Some (20.7%) of the farmers and 16% herders were of the view of reporting their cases of conflict to the Local Government Council officials. Proportions of 22% and 12% of the farmers and herders respectively indicated that extension agents were the people that mostly engage for the arbitration of conflict between farmers and herders in the study area.

These imply that, the people have confidence in the performances of the traditional authorities in the area. This position coincided with the finding of [10] that, the essence of such institutions is to preserve the customs and traditions of the people and to manage aggression arising among or between members of the community by the

instrumentality of laws and customs of the people. They undoubtedly play the most significant role in both managing conflict informally and arranging peace-making meetings when matters get out of hand. Similarly, [12] reported that official structures such as the courts generally have a bad reputation from rural communities and regarded as a last resort. For some of the villagers, taking dispute cases to the formal authority like police/ courts of law may worsens the relationship between the disputants [18].

#### **3.2 Strategies Used by the Traditional Institutions in Management of Conflicts between Farmers and Herders**

In resolving conflict between farmers and herders, the traditional institutions use a number of strategies as their role in managing conflict in their various communities.

Results in Table 2 show that the farmers ranked the resolution of conflict through the payment of compensation as the first while the herders (Table 3) ranked it second. The implication is that most of the compensations are being collected from the herders and were sometimes not fairly negotiated. However, the payment of compensations helps a lot in the resolution of conflicts in many communities. This has coincided with the position of [13] that the conflicts were resolved by the payment of compensation to the offended party in each case.

The herders and farmers ranked the mediation method of farmers-herders conflict resolution first and second respectively (Tables 2 and 3). The mediation approach, according to key informants from both farmers and herders, engages a wide range of the conflict resolution stakeholders into discussions. It is a "peaceful" dispute resolution tool that is complementary to the existing court system and the practice of arbitration [5].

Employing jokes between a Fulani or Shuwa-Arab herder and a Kanuri sedentary farmer during a process of conflict resolution between them usually yields positive results as it has been ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> by the groups of herders and farmers respectively.

Spiritual (religious) approach was ranked third and fourth by the farmers and the herders respectively. The arbitrators invite the conflicting

**Table 1. Institutions involved in Farmer-herder conflicts management\***

Institution	Farmers (150)		Herders (75)		Pooled (225)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Traditional institutions	134	82.7	67	89.6	201	89.3
Legal courts of law	84	56.0	34	45.3	118	52.4
Police	43	28.7	26	34.7	69	30.7
Local Government Officials	31	20.7	12	16.0	43	19.1
Extension agents	33	22.0	9	12.0	42	18.7
Non-Governmental Organizations	17	11.3	6	8.0	23	10.2
State Government Officials	8	5.3	7	9.3	15	6.7
Army	10	6.7	3	4.0	13	5.8

\*Multiple responses  
Source: Field survey 2015

**Table 2. Pair wise ranking of the strategies used by traditional institutions from farmers**

	Strategies used by the traditional institutions							Scores	Ranking
	MD	CM	CS	CV	JK	SP	OT		
Mediation	xxx	CM	MD	MD	MD	MD	MD	5	2nd
Compensation		xxx	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM	6	1st
Carrot & Stick			xxx	CS	JK	SP	CS	2	5th
Coercive				xxx	JK	SP	CV	1	6th
Jokes					xxx	JK	JK	4	3rd
Spiritual						xxx	SP	3	4th
Oath taking							xxx	0	7 <sup>th</sup>

Note: MD = Mediation, CM = Compensation, CS = Carrot and stick, CV = Coercive, JK = Jokes, SP = Spiritual and OT = Oath taking

**Table 3. Pair wise ranking of the strategies used by traditional institutions from herders**

	Strategies used by the traditional institutions								Scores	Ranking
	MD	CM	CS	CV	JK	SP	CU	OT		
Mediation	xxx	MD	MD	MD	MD	MD	MD	MD	7	1st
Compensation		xxx	CM	CM	JK	CM	CM	CM	5	2nd
Carrot & Stick			xxx	CS	JK	SP	CS	CS	3	4th
Coercive				xxx	JK	SP	CU	OT	0	6th
Jokes					xxx	JK	CU	JK	5	2nd
Spiritual						xxx	CU	SP	3	4th
Cursing							xxx	CU	4	3rd
Oath taking								xxx	1	5th

Note: MD = Mediation, CM = Compensation, CS = Carrot and stick, CV = Coercive, JK = Jokes, SP = Spiritual, CU = Cursing and OT = Oath taking

parties and discuss with them the importance of harmonious co-existence among people, and preach to them the values of forgiveness and blessing. This has coincided with the position of [19] that the spiritual means of conflict resolution is more effective than many other approaches in the typical African communities.

The conflict arbitration through carrot and stick (offering a combination of rewards and punishment), coercive action (use of force), and oath taking (with Holy books or with other objects) were ranked fifth, sixth and seventh by

the farmers respectively. The herders also ranked them according to their choice (see Tables 2 and 3).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study found that there are existing traditional institutions which are attempting to manage this conflict. The respondents expressed their satisfaction with the performance of the traditional institutions in managing the conflicts between farmers and herders in the localities. However, the results revealed that majority

(89.3%) of the respondents are of the opinion that, the most preferred strategies for managing conflicts between farmers and herders in the study area are the traditional institutions. More so, the farmers ranked the resolution of conflict through the payment of compensation as the first, while the herders ranked it second.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been put forward based on the findings of the research:

- The traditional rulers in conjunction with all the stakeholders at the village level to initiate and maintain routine or annual meetings in which the farmers would be reminded of the importance of completing their farming activities on time in order to avoid conflict between the farmers and herders in the area.
- Strengthening the traditional institutions through constitutional amendment, thus, to return their power to adjudicate conflict in the rural areas which had been taken away by the 1976 Local Government Reform.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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