

**PERCEPTIONAL ANALYSIS: EFFECTIVENESS OF TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS
IN FARMER-HERDER CONFLICTS MANAGEMENT IN
BORNO STATE, NIGERIA**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to assess the perception of the effectiveness of traditional institutions in Farmer-Herder conflicts management in three selected Local Government Areas (Damboa, Jere and Magumeri LGAs) of Borno state, Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 225 sample size respondents which include farmers (150) and herders (75) respectively. A structured questionnaire was used in 3-points Likert scale to collect data for this study which was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage). The results revealed that on the average, majority (68.9%) of the farmers perceived the performance of the traditional institutions in arbitration of conflict between farmers and herders to be effective. Whereby, the ability of the traditional arbitrators to restore peace after their resolutions (76%) was the first reason for rating the performance of the traditional institutions as effective by the herders. However, the study recommend that the 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: Perception, Effectiveness, Traditional, Institutions, Conflicts, management

INTRODUCTION

In West Africa particularly in Nigeria, there has been a considerable increase in natural resource conflict since the beginning of the 1990s (Blench and Dendo, 2005). These forms of conflicts have always played a role in many parts of Nigeria, but recent conditions have led to an increase in their intensity and complexity (IITA, 2011). An area that has been of particular concern is clashes between farmers and pastoralists, especially in wetland areas. This has come about because the full potential of wetland (*fadama*) areas has just begun to be realized in terms of food production and their more effective exploitation has been the objective of several donor projects from the 1980s onwards (Blench and Dendo, 2005).

Clashes between herders and crop farmers have been a major cause of increasing violence and general insecurity in Nigeria. In most of these encounters, citizens are killed regularly; the destruction or loss of property leaves an already endangered populace even poorer (Ishaku, 2014). 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 (Marighetto *et al.*, 2004). The essence of these institutions is to preserve the customs and traditions of the people and to manage conflicts arising among or between members of their communities by the instrumentality of norms and customs of the people (Nweke, 2012). The persistence and expansion of the system of traditional rulers is thus crucial in understanding the broader dynamics of power in Nigeria in recent decades. Part of the logic of this persistence is that traditional rulers are often more trusted than local and state government officials during post-conflict situations, which are themselves becoming more common (Blench and Dendo 2006).

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 (BSMAFFR, 2011). Though, some of the studies (Umar, 2004; Onuoha, 2008 and IRIN, 2013) suggest for bottom-up approach by involving local community groups in management of their

resources. However, the studies also seemed to have overlooked the importance of traditional authorities in resolving conflicts between farmers and herders. This study is therefore, aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the traditional institutions in managing farmer-herder conflicts in Borno state, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Borno State lies in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria between Latitudes 10° 30' and 13° 50' North and Longitudes 11° and 13° 45' East which occupies an area of 69,435 sq km. (Waziri, 2009). 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 (Bleench and Dendo, 2005).

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed 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 (BSMAFFR, 2011) 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, primary data was collected from a structured questionnaire in 3-points Likert scale. Descriptive statistics (Mean average and percentages) was used to analyze the data generated for this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Farmers' Perception of Effectiveness of the Traditional Institutions in Farmer-Herder Conflict Management

The results in Table 1 shows that, on the average, majority (68.9%) of the farmers perceived the performance of the traditional institutions in arbitration of conflict between farmers and herders to be effective. This indicates that, most of the farmers expressed satisfactory responses. Specifically, seven positive perception statements were presented to them, out of which, the quick and less expensive nature of the traditional arbitration (72.6%) was considered as the most important reason for accepting the traditional conflict arbitration. The results further showed that the ability of the traditional arbitrators to reconcile and reintegrate parties in conflict into the community was the second most acceptable statement for the farmers. Other statements like, transparency of the traditional conflict resolutions (70.7%), the termination of the farmer-herder conflict cases at the traditional level (70.0%) and organizing annual meetings with the farmers and herders for the prevention of the conflicts between farmers and herders in the locality (68.7%) were showing the acceptability of the traditional conflict arbitration.

This result coincided with the findings of Umar (2013) that in some areas, the pastoralists were always said to win cases because they were wealthier than farmers and could pay more. Elsewhere, judgments were always reported to go in favour of farmers. However, on the mean

average 68.9% of the farmers were still satisfied with the performance of the traditional institutions in handling conflicts between farmers and herders in the study area.

Table 1: Farmers' Perception of Effectiveness of Traditional Institutions (n=150)*

Statement	Agree 3	Undecided 2	Disagree 1
Traditional rulers' arbitration is quicker and less expensive	109(72.6)	16(10.7)	225(16.6)
Traditional conflict resolution is more transparent	106(70.7)	10(6.7)	34(22.7)
Win – win result is attainable through traditional arbitrations	99(66.0)	22(14.7)	29(19.3)
Cases of farmers and herders conflicts are mostly terminated at the level of traditional rulers	105(70.0)	18(12.0)	45(30)
Traditional approach mostly restores peace after the resolution	105(70.0)	19(12.7)	26(17.4)
Traditional rulers reconcile and reintegrate both parties in conflict	109(72.0)	15(10.0)	26(17.3)
Traditional rulers organize annual meetings with farmers and herders on prevention of conflict in the locality	103(68.7)	10(6.7)	27(24.7)
Average Percentages	(68.9)	(5.3)	(25.9)

NB: Figures in brackets are percentage of perception of the respondents, * Means multiple responses

Herders' Perception of the Effectiveness of the Traditional Institutions in Farmer-Herder Conflict Management

A similar set of seven positive perception statements on the performances of the traditional institutions were issued to the respondents of the herders and their results are contained in Table 3. The results show that the average percentages were found to be 65.4, 12.4 and 29.3 percents for Agree, Undecided and Disagree respectively. Out of the statements, ability of the traditional arbitrators to restore peace after their resolutions (76%) was the first reason for rating the performance of the traditional institutions as effective by the herders. Their second reason was on the quick and less expensive nature of the traditional arbitrations (74.7%). The third was the attainment of win-win results through traditional approach (60%).

This result coincided with the findings of Umar (2013) that in some areas, the pastoralists were always said to win cases because they were wealthier than farmers and could pay more. Elsewhere, judgments were always reported to go in favour of farmers. However, on the mean average 65.4% of the herders were still satisfied with the performance of the traditional institutions in handling conflicts between farmers and herders in the study area.

Table 3: Herders' perception of Effectiveness of the Traditional Institutions (n=75)*

Statement	Agree 3	Undecided 2	Disagree 1
Traditional rulers' arbitration is quicker and less expensive.	56(74.7)	4(5.3)	15(20.0)
Traditional conflict resolution is more transparent.	43(57.3)	9(12.0)	23(30.6)
Win – win result is attainable through traditional method.	55(60.0)	17(22.7)	13(17.3)
Cases of farmers and herders conflicts are mostly terminated at the level of traditional rulers.	48(64.0)	3(4.0)	24(32.0)
Traditional approach mostly restores peace after the resolution.	57(76.0)	8(10.7)	10(13.3)
Traditional rulers reconcile and reintegrate both parties in conflict.	44(58.7)	21(28.0)	10(13.3)
Traditional rulers organize annual meetings with farmers and herders on prevention of conflict in the locality.	50(66.7)	3(4.0)	22(29.3)
Average Percentage	(65.4)	(12.4)	(29.3)

Figures in brackets are percentage of perception of the respondents, * Means multiple responses

Conclusion

The higher frequency of the positive perception by the both groups (farmers and herders) on the traditional arbitrations indicates that the farmers and herders were optimistic of the role played by the traditional institutions, particularly their ability in resolving farmer-herder conflicts on time with less expenses, restoration of peace after their resolution, reintegration of the parties in conflicts into the community and conducting annual meetings with the farmers and the herders in the locality. This justified that the performance of the traditional institutions were found to be effective with the respondents from both groups.

Recommendation

The following recommendation has been put forward based on the findings of this research:

1. 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.

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