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Effectiveness of institutional conflict resolution strategies on farmer-herder disputes: Implication for sustainable livelihoods in Nigeria

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Abstract

Conflicts between crop farmers and herders are common in nearly every part of Nigeria. This menace poses a formidable challenge to socioeconomic development and a serious threat to food security and the sustainable livelihood of the agrarian communities. While various institutions were involved in conflict resolution, there is a dearth of information empirically on their operational efficacy based on strategies employed. Therefore, this study assessed the effectiveness of conflict resolution strategies employed by institutions in crop farmers- herders dispute in Oyo State, Nigeria.

A multistage sampling technique was used in selecting 107 farmers, while snowball sampling was used to select 53 herders in Oyo State. Data were collected through a validated structured interview schedule and were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The findings revealed that the mean age of farmers was 43 years while that of herders was 32 years. The causes of conflicts between farmers and herders include crop damages by herders (89.7 % and 60.4 %), competition for available land (67.3 % and 62.3 %), sexual harassment (82.2 % and 34.0 %), droughts and climate change (desertification) (87.9 % and 73.6 %), respectively. Amotekun (Western Nigeria Security Network) was the most involved institution in conflict resolution between farmers and herders in the study area. The most effective strategies employed by the institutions include peace-building initiatives that promote social cohesion, payment of fines, police arrest, and reconciliation programmes for promoting forgiveness and reintegration. The result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) revealed that there exist positive and significant relationships between age ($r=0.204$, $p < 0.05$), years of herding experience ($r=0.171$, $p < 0.05$) and the effectiveness of various conflict resolution strategies. The observed effectiveness of social cohesion initiatives supports a shift toward restorative justice frameworks rather than purely punitive measures. The study recommends that there is a need for scaling up peacebuilding initiatives and restorative local programmes to complement formal security measures in safeguarding agrarian livelihoods.

Keywords: Conflict, conflict resolution strategies, effectiveness, farmers-herders, institutions