

Utilization of different Coping Strategies among Rural Dwellers in Farmer-Herder's Conflict Prone areas in Ekiti State, Nigeria: A Case Study of Oke-Ako

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Abstract: - This study examined the utilization of different coping strategies among rural dwellers in Oke-Ako, Ikole Local Government area of Ekiti state, Nigeria. Thirty (30) respondents were selected to constitute the sample size for the study using random sampling technique. Data collection was done through the use of interview schedule and data collected were described using statistical tools such as frequency count, percentage and mean. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyze the data. Findings from the study revealed that mean age was 58.80 years. The respondents were mostly male (90.0%), married (86.7%) and Christian (80.0%). High proportion (40.0%) had no formal education. High proportion (53.3%) had one or two alternative means of livelihood, 93.3% practiced rain-fed agriculture, and 70.0% produced for both food and income purposes. Sleepless night (mean=1.80) ranked highest among the psycho-social effects of conflict. The coping strategies utilized included the following, in a sequential order, among others: prayed for peace (mean=1.97), use of experience (mean=1.73), accepted it as fate (mean=1.70), buying food (mean=1.47), worked harder (mean=1.27), help from relations (mean=1.20), and help from local leaders (mean=1.07). The level of utilization of different conflict's coping strategies was low among 56.7%. Age ($r=-0.264$, $p=0.159$) and number of alternative occupation ($r=0.094$, $p=0.620$) were not significantly associated with the utilization of coping strategies by the respondents. The study concludes that there was a low level of utilization of different coping strategies by the respondents in the study area.

Keywords:- Coping Strategies; Farmer-Herder's Conflict; Rural Dwellers.

I. INTRODUCTION

The farmer-herder's crisis has been seen as an age long issue. In many places, herders have clashed with farmers and their host communities over cattle destruction of crops; farmers' encroachment on grazing reserves and indiscriminate bush burning by nomads which normally leads to loss of crops (Adeoye, 2017; Ofem and Inyang, 2014; Olaleye, Odutola, Ojo, Umar and Ndanitsa, 2010). In recent times, there have been prevalent cases of herders-farmers clashes in Nigeria. Ofuoku and Isife (2009) noted that in Densina, Adamawa State, 28 people were killed; while about 2,500 farmers were displaced and rendered homeless in a clash between them. Similarly, Idowu (2017) submits that the violence has displaced more than 100,000 people in Benue and Enugu States, and left them under the care of relatives or in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps while many are still struggling to rebuild their lives. The trend was also witnessed in Ekiti State where attacks by herdsmen were reported most especially in Ido osi Local Government area of the State and Oke-Ako, in Ikole Local Government area of the State. Due to the failure of security agencies to control the excesses of the herdsmen, the youth in various communities of Ekiti State had on several occasions, launched reprisal attacks on the herders' abodes ("Gaa"), sacking them and destroying their properties (Olugbenga, 2013).

A study conducted by Umeh and Chukwu (2016) in Ebonyi state indicated that the economic loss on both conflicting parties was huge and that the herders seemed to have incurred more in monetary terms than the farmers. While the farmers lost lots of crops and farms to the conflicts, herdsmen lost several cattle and sheep. The reverse was the case in Oyo State, as Adalakun, Adurogbangba and Akinbile (2015) found that farmers were worst hit by the conflicts as it affects their farm families and has led to reduction in farm output, loss of properties and scarcity of food. According to Umen (2016), the Nigerian constitution has given every citizen the fundamental right to freedom of movement in search of legitimate businesses; and herders are seen along

these lines. Consequently, there may never be a time without farmers-herders' conflict either minor or serious one. Farmer-herder's conflict has constituted a national menace, despite the attempts by Government to forestall the incessant farmer-herder's conflict in the country.

Recently, Policy on establishment of Rural Grazing Areas (RUGA) settlements was proposed by the Federal Government in order to address farmer-herder's conflict in the country. However, the policy was suspended because it was seen not to be consistent with the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP). This was evident in the report of Mudashir et al (2019) that presidency stated that the idea of RUGA settlement was conceived to address the clashes between farmers and herders. However, Mudashir and Yahaya (2019), reported that presidency announced the suspension of RUGA project because it was not consistent with the NLTP. This implies that, there are no permanent solutions to farmer-herder's conflict at present. Therefore, the concept of conflict's coping strategies requires utmost attention. It therefore becomes imperative to understand the coping strategies of the rural dwellers with a view to improving the strategies, through useful research-based recommendations, while all stakeholders continue to work on the permanent solutions to the problem. It was against this background that this study investigated the Utilization of different Coping Strategies among Rural Dwellers in Oke-Ako, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Oke-Ako, Ikole local Government Area of Ekiti state, Nigeria. Oke-Ako is one of the rural villages in Ikole local Government Area of Ekiti State. Farming is the major occupation of the inhabitants of Oke-Ako and the village can be safely regarded as an agrarian community. The target population of the study comprised the rural dwellers in the study area. Random sampling technique was used to select thirty (30) rural dwellers which constituted the sample size for the study. Data were elicited from the rural dwellers using a well-structured interview schedule. The dependent variable which was utilization of coping strategies was measured on a three-point scale of often used which attracted a score 2, somewhat used which was scored 1 and not used which attracted a score of 0. The mean score was obtained and used to categorize the respondents based on their level of use of coping strategies. The rural dwellers with the

score below the mean score were categorized as having low level of use while the respondents with the score of mean and above were categorized as having high level of use of coping strategies during and after farmers-herder's conflict in the study area. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency count, percentage, mean and Inferential statistical tool such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

➤ *Personal Characteristics of the Rural Dwellers*

The result of the analysis in Table 1 shows the results of analysis of personal characteristics of the rural dwellers. According to the table, the mean age of the respondents was 58.80 years which implies that the respondents were mostly elderly people and this could make them vulnerable to attack by herders. The table further reveals that 90.0% of the respondents were males. This agrees with Olaleye et al. (2010) who revealed that males are more involved in farming activities. This implies that agricultural production in the study area was dominated by male headed households. Awareness of this by herdsman could aggravate conflict, since it is natural for men to defend and prove that they are actually in control of whatever belongs to them. It was revealed from the result that 86.7% of the respondents were married and this implies that the respondents could get assistance from their spouse or relatives in production activities as well as during and after conflict. Result of the analysis also unveiled that majority (83.3%) of the respondents were of Yoruba ethnic group. This implies that Yoruba was the predominant ethnic group in the study area, and they were predominantly farmers. The herdsman could therefore, naturally see them as potential enemies; insinuating that Yoruba farmers could attack their animals at will. This could be one of the factors that trigger conflict in the study area. The conflict may be further aggravated, since there may be language barrier in communicating with the herders which are mostly believed to be of Fulani ethnic group. Findings by Ofuoku (2009) in a study reveals that farmers and herdsman experience more losses than ever as a result of undue insinuation among them.

According to the result of the analysis; it was discovered that 80.0% of the respondents were Christian. This means that, the study area was dominated by Christian. Consequently, there.

Socio-economic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean
Age			
≤25 years	-	-	
26-50 years	12	40.0	58.80
>50 years	18	60.0	
Sex			
Male	27	90.0	
Female	3	10.0	
Marital status			
Single	2	6.7	
Married	26	86.7	
Divorced	1	3.3	
Widowed	1	3.3	
Ethnicity			
Ebira	4	13.3	
Igbo	1	3.3	
Yoruba	25	83.3	
Religion			
No religion	1	3.3	
Islamic	2	6.7	
Christianity	24	80.0	
Traditional	3	10.0	
Educational status			
No formal education	12	40.0	
Adult education	1	3.3	
Quranic education	1	3.3	
Primary education	8	26.7	
Secondary education	4	13.3	
Tertiary education	4	13.3	

Table 1:- Distribution of respondents based on their personal characteristics

Source: Field Survey, 2017

May be unnecessary rivalry in the study area between Muslim and Christian, since generally most herdsmen are believed to be Muslim. It may equally be a great tool for peaceful co-existence of the farmers and herders in the study area, if the religious differences are well managed. The result further revealed that 40% of the respondents had no formal education while 26.7%, 13.3%, 13.3%, 3.3% and 3.3% had primary, secondary, tertiary, Quranic and adult education, respectively. The implication is that higher proportion of the respondents had no formal education and thus could affect farmers-herdsmen’s relationship, as required knowledge for peaceful co-existence through education may be inadequate among the rural dwellers.

➤ *Occupational Characteristics*

The results in Table 2 showed that majority (70.0%) of the respondents had more than one hectare of land. This implies that majority of the respondents did take farming as their major source of livelihood. Therefore, any form of destruction of crops by the livestock of herders would be

vehemently frowned at. The findings further revealed that high proportion (46.7%) of the respondents had no alternative occupation while 40.0% and 13.3% had one and two alternative occupations, respectively. This means that the large number of the respondents had one or two alternative means of livelihood. Therefore, alternative sources of income could provide some level of relief during and after conflicts. However, the proportion without alternative occupation is worrisome and the impacts of conflicts could be more on them than others. It was also revealed from the analysis that 93.3% of the respondents were practicing rain-fed agriculture. The implication is that the respondents may not be able to produce all year round. This might cause unhealthy competition between farming and grazing during the season.

Result of the analysis also unveiled that majority (70.0%) of the respondents were producing mainly for food and income. The implication is that the respondents chose farming as their means of livelihood in terms of food and income generation for the family. However, Adisa and Adekunle (2010) reported that the motive for farming was majorly for income generation in North central Nigeria. According to the result of the analysis, it was discovered that about 53.3% of the respondents had more than 10 years of farming experience. The implication is that the respondents have adequate experience in farming to afford them the knowledge of traditional technicalities that could prevent easy grazing on their farm land.

Occupational characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Farm size		
<0.5 ha	2	6.7
0.5-1 ha	7	23.3
Above 1 ha	21	70.0
Alternative occupation		
None	14	46.7
One	12	40.0
Two	4	13.3
Production system		
Rain-fed	28	93.3
Irrigation	1	3.3
Rain-fed and irrigation	1	3.3
Purpose of production		
Food	6	20.0
Income	3	10.0
Food and income	21	70.0
Farming experience		
≤10 years	14	46.7
11-20 years	3	10.0
Above 20 years	13	43.3

Table 2:- Distribution of respondents based on their occupational characteristics

Source: Field Survey, 2017

➤ *Psycho – Social effects of farmer-herder’s conflict in the study area*

The result of analysis of Psycho – social effects of conflict in the study area as shown in Table 3 revealed that ‘Sleepless night’(\bar{x} =1.8), ‘reduction in food quantity and quality’(\bar{x} =1.6),’ as well as ‘complaint at home’(\bar{x} =1.6)’ were the prominent psycho-social effects of conflicts in the study area. This means that ‘Sleepless night’, ‘reduction in food quantity and quality’ as well as ‘complaint at home’ are of great concern in the study area. This is not far-fetch from Ofuoku and Isife (2010) who reported reduction in output and

income of crop farmers as a result of destruction of crops by cattle and indiscriminate bush burning as one of the Socio-economic effects of conflicts. They further stated that, a lot of farmers lost part or whole of their crops which brought about reduced yield that translated into low income on the part of farmers whose major occupation is farming. They also believed that, this tends to negatively affect the farmers’ savings, credit repayment ability and food security as well as economic welfare of the urban dwellers that depend on these farmers for food supply, and this is very discouraging to the farmers and rural agricultural development.

Psycho-social effects of conflicts	Low	Moderate	High	Mean	SD	Rank
Marital Dissatisfaction	73.3	10.0	16.7	1.43	0.77	5 th
Declined quality of students’ education	73.3	13.3	13.3	1.40	0.72	7 th
Physical exhaustion	63.3	30.0	6.7	1.43	0.63	5 th
Sleepless night	33.3	53.3	13.3	1.80	0.66	1 st
Reduced interest in family matters	83.3	13.3	3.3	1.20	0.48	9 th
Anger/anxiety/emotional exhaustion	76.7	-	23.3	1.47	0.86	4 th
Reduction in food quality/quantity	66.7	6.7	26.7	1.60	0.89	2 nd
Complaints at home	70.0	-	30.0	1.60	0.93	2 nd
Farm/Job abandonment	93.3	3.3	3.3	1.10	0.40	10 th
Staying more away from home	83.3	6.7	10.0	1.27	0.64	8 th

Table 3:- Distribution of respondents based on the Psycho – social effects of conflict

Source: Field Survey, 2017

➤ **Use of coping strategies**

The result of analysis of coping strategies utilized by the respondents in the study area are presented in Table 3. The

table reveals that praying for peace (\bar{x} =1.97) ranked highest among the

Coping strategies	Used often	Used somewhat	Not used	Mean	Rank
Worked harder	33.3	60.0	6.7	1.27	5 th
Used my experience	83.3	6.7	10.0	1.73	2 nd
Borrowed money	43.3	13.3	43.3	1.00	8 th
Prepared for the worse	10.0	-	90.0	0.20	15 th
Sold farm	16.7	6.7	76.7	0.40	14 th
Bought food	63.3	20.0	16.7	1.47	4 th
Sowed less	16.7	50.0	33.3	0.83	9 th
Took another job	16.7	36.7	46.7	0.70	11 th
Tighten farm security	6.7	6.7	86.7	0.20	15 th
Used charm	3.3	-	96.7	0.07	18 th
Accepted it as fate	73.3	23.3	3.3	1.70	3 rd
Prayed for peace	96.7	3.3	-	1.97	1 st
Pretended it wasn’t bad	3.3	60.0	36.7	0.67	13 th
Take it out on others	3.3	-	96.7	0.07	18 th
Used drugs/alcohol	-	3.3	96.7	0.03	21 st
Appease other party	3.3	13.3	83.3	0.20	15 th
Help from relations	46.7	26.7	26.7	1.20	6 th
Help from local leaders	40.0	26.7	33.3	1.07	7 th
Sought litigation	3.3	-	96.7	0.07	18 th
Help from local government	16.7	36.7	46.7	0.70	11 th
Help from state government	16.7	40.0	43.3	0.73	10 th

Table 3:- Percentage and mean distribution of respondents based on the use of coping strategies

Source: Field Survey, 2017

coping strategies utilized. This was followed by the use of experience ($\bar{x}=1.73$), accepted it as fate ($\bar{x}=1.70$), buying food ($\bar{x}=1.47$), worked harder ($\bar{x}=1.27$), got help from relations ($\bar{x}=1.20$), got help from local leaders ($\bar{x}=1.07$), money borrowing ($\bar{x}=1.00$), tightened farm security ($\bar{x}=0.83$) as well as getting help from state government ($\bar{x}=0.73$), among others. This implies that respondents utilized various coping strategies to cope with the farmers-herdsmen’s conflict in the study area. However, the prominent strategies utilized were: praying for peace, use of experience, accepting their fate, buying of food, working harder, help from relations and local leaders, among others. This result slightly supports Adebayo and Olaniyi (2008) who found the roles of traditional rulers as being important in the arbitration of conflict cases in savanna area of Oyo State.

➤ **Level of use of coping strategies**

Table 4 reveals that there was a low level of utilization of coping strategies among 56.7% of the respondents while 43.3% of the respondents highly utilized the conflict’s coping strategies. This implies that, the utilization of coping strategies among the respondents was low and this may be due to lack of proper orientation and sensitization.

Level of use of coping strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Low level of use	17	56.7
High level of use	13	43.3
Total	30	100
Minimum score	6	
Maximum score	24	
Mean score	16.27	

Table 4:- Distribution of the respondents based on the level of use of coping strategies during and after conflict
Source: Field Survey, 2017

➤ *Test of relationship between age of the respondents and utilization of different coping strategies*

Result of analysis in Table 5 shows that, there was a negative but no significant relationship between the age and use of different coping strategies by the respondents ($r=-0.264$, $p = 0.159$), using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). This implies that, the age of the respondents has little or nothing to do with the use of different coping strategies to mitigate the effects of farmers-herders conflict in the study area.

Variable	r	p-value	Decision
Relationship between age and utilization of coping strategies	-0.264	0.159	Not significant

Table 5:- Test of relationship between the age of the respondents and use of different coping strategies

➤ *Test of relationship between the number of alternative occupations of the respondents and utilization of different coping strategies*

Result of analysis in Table 6 unveils that, there was no significant relationship between the number of alternative occupation ($r = 0.094$, $p = 0.620$) and utilization of different

coping strategies among the respondents using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The implication is that, utilization of different coping strategies is not a function of number of alternative occupations of the respondents in the study area.

Variable	r	p-value	Decision
Relationship between number of alternative occupation and utilization of coping strategies	0.094	0.620	Not significant

Table 6: Test of relationship between the number of alternative occupations of the respondents and use of different coping strategies
Source: Field Survey, 2017

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it could be concluded that, the respondents were mostly male, married, Christian and Yoruba. More than half of them had one or two alternative occupations. They mostly practiced rain-fed agriculture and produced for both food and income purposes. Sleepless night, reduction in food quantity and quality as well as complaint at home, were the prominent psycho-social effects of conflicts in the study area. The level of utilization of conflict’s coping strategies was low among the respondents. Therefore, the respondents should be encouraged to utilize coping strategies that can sustain peace and avoid those that

can disrupt peaceful coexistence among the conflict actors as well as other rural dwellers in the study area.

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