



Socio-Economic Dynamics of Communal Conflicts Among Farmers in Ogoja Agricultural Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria

***Effiong, J.B., & Machu, P.O.**

Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

*Corresponding author email: johneffiong090@gmail.com

Abstract

This study assessed the socioeconomic dynamics of communal conflicts among farmers in Ogoja Agricultural Zone. The specific objectives of the study were to; identify the socioeconomic characteristics of respondents in the study area and identify the various socioeconomic causes of communal conflicts in the study area such as; Encroachment into farmland by other people results to conflicts, Struggle for land in the community and neighboring communities generates conflicts, and Empowerment of youths with arms by politician easily triggers conflicts, among others. The study was conducted in Ogoja Agricultural Zone made up of Bekwarra, Obudu, Obanliku and Yala Local Government Areas. Two hundred and fifty (250) farmers were used for the study, data were obtained using structural questionnaire. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics: frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The result of the analysis showed that majority of the respondents were males constituting (70.40%), also majority were within the age brackets of 31 – 45 years. The study further revealed that a good number of the respondents were married (69.60%). A large proportion of the population had attained primary/secondary level of education being their highest educational standards. The socioeconomic caused of communal conflicts among farmers in the study area were; poor means of livelihood in the community = 4.26 (ranked 1st), criminal gang and cult activities = 4.42 (ranked 2nd), high level of illiteracy among young farmers = 4.15 (ranked 3rd). Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that socioeconomic needs assessment should be carried out in conflict zones of Ogoja Agricultural belt with a view to solving some socioeconomic need of the people, such needs includes livelihood needs and literacy needs.

Keywords: Communal Conflicts, Dynamics, Farmers, Socioeconomics, Ogoja

Introduction

Communal conflicts have been a persistent challenge in Nigeria leading to socioeconomic consequence (Aboh& Effiong 2019a). Amidst these conflicts the impact on farmers remains critical concern (Aboh& Effiong 2019b). Many researcher such as Effiong, 2013a, Effiong, 2024a, Aboh& Effiong 2024b have research on Effect of conflicts on among yam farmers in Cross River State, Ethnic conflicts in Cross River State (Effiong &Aboh, 2019c, Effiong, 2013b) non had considered the socioeconomic dynamics of communal conflicts among farmers in Ogoja, Agricultural zone, thus creating a gap which this study intends to till. It is on this note that this study deems it necessary to find out the socioeconomic dynamics of communal conflicts among farmers in Ogoja Agricultural zone, Cross River State, Nigeria(Effiong et al., 2025; Effiong et al., 2025; and Effiong & Effiong, 2012). There are different types of conflicts in Nigeria among which are: Ethnic conflict, Religions conflicts, Political conflicts and Economic conflicts (Effiong, 2013). Ethnicity is a social phenomenon that is manifested in interactions among individuals of different ethnic groups within a political system (Effiong & Effiong,2015). Religious conflicts deal with difference in worship (Muslim and

Christian). Majority of the study sources accept that half of the country populations are Christians, the other half are Muslims. These two groups hardly agree with themselves taken into considerations that both of them have separate religious practices (Effiong & Etim, 2024; Ntui et al., 2022; Effiong et al., 2023; and Etim et al., 2022).

Farmers in Nigeria are characterized with low infrastructure development, poor level of normal education, old age, gender issues, and low level of income (Effiong 2024a). Their major occupation is agriculture (Farming) and the link between agriculture, rural infrastructure, and farmer's income are crucial given that agriculture is the mainstay of the nation's economy which serves as the largest source of employment and income generation of the majority of rural dwellers in Nigeria (World Bank, 2018). Farmers' income is influenced by the household size, educational attainment, farming experience and training (Effiong & Iyamah, 2022). An educated farmer knows the timing of crop season, he/she adopts all agronomic practices at the right time to ensure good farm yield. Records of farming activities and financial transaction are kept to determine whether profit is made or not (Effiong 2024b). However only few farmers' are able to keep records taking into consideration their poor level of formal education attainment at the rural areas. Farming is practice by both genders sharing roles performance on farm operation/activities. Farming is equally perceived by many as the business for aged men and women. Available statistics showed that very few young men and women choose farming as occupation (Effiong & Aboh 2018).

The premise of conflicts in Nigeria consists essentially in the struggle for individuals and groups to control the limited resources (Effiong & Aboh 2019; Effiong & Aboh 2024a) (Effiong & Asikong 2013). Diverse exclusive ethnic cultural interests and societal goals of political and economic survival which involves stiff struggles, provide a fertile ground for conflicts. According to Effiong (2023), the major causes of communal conflict in Nigeria include: Accusation and allegation of neglect, oppression, denomination, exploitation. Victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and bigotry. It is difficult to know who is marginalizing who in Nigeria because all ethnic groups from the biggest to the smallest complain of marginalization (Effiong et al., 2023).

However, most of the communal conflicts in Nigeria are caused partly by land boundary and chieftaincy dispute but mainly by domination and oppression, frustration, aggression, displacement, divide and rule policies and diversionary scapegoat techniques (Abubakar, 2019; Effiong, Etuk & Iyamah 2023; Effiong 2024b). Relatively, Olajide (2015) asserts the major causes of communal conflicts include: indigene and settler conundrum, economic resource, socio-cultural factors, political factors and religious factors. The indigene and settler conundrum are far wider than land space. Ogbeidi (2021) (Effiong & Iheme, 2024) posits that Nigeria is largely a tribal society in which various ethnic groups lay claims to territories to the exclusion of other groups.

Materials and methods

Location of Study

The study was conducted in Ogoja Agricultural Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria. Ogoja Zone comprise Five (5) Local Government Area namely: Yala, Ogoja, Bekwarra, Obudu and Obanliku Local Government Area. It lies between latitude 6°35'N, 8°38'E and 6°55'N, 9°27'E' North of the Equator and longitude 8°39'N, 8°42'E and 8°81'N, 8°92'E East of the Greenwich. Ogoja zone shares boundaries with Benue State in the North, Ebonyi State in the South, Boki Local Government Area in the West and Cameroon at the extreme eastern part of the geo-graphical region (Effiong, Ijioma & Effiong 2016). Ogoja agricultural zone is blessed with arable land good for agricultural production. The inhabitants of the various local government areas are rural farmers, Traders, Civil servants, Blacksmiths, wood carvers, with some industries such as groundnut and Garri processing. Farming is the dominant occupation of the inhabitants which is basically crops and animal production. Major crops cultivated here include: Yam, Rice, Groundnut, Cowpea, Plantain, Banana, Maize, Melon, Okra, Tomato and Guinea-corn. Animals reared in this Agricultural Zones include: Cattles, Goats, Sheep, Pigs and poultry production. These farm produce are sold to traders in neighboring states to earn income. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the study. At stage one, purposive sampling technique was used to select five (5) core areas of conflicts in Ogoja Agricultural zone. They are; Yala, Ogoja, Bekwarra, Obanliku and Obudu blocks. At the second stage, two (2) communities from each of the five block were incidence of conflicts occur were also purposively selected namely; Ijiraga and Wankade (Yala), Mbudu East 1 and Ekajuk 1 (Ogoja), Gakem and Ogboro (Bekwarra), Bishiri South and Bebi (Obanliku),

Ukortung and Abonkip (Obudu) respectively. At the third stage, a simple random sampling technique was employed to select twenty-five respondents from each of the conflict areas. This gave a total sample size of two hundred and fifty (250) respondents used for the study. Primary data were obtained using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based on the study objectives, and was scrutinized to ensure both face and content validity is achieved. The reliability of the instrument was achieved using a test-retest reliability technique.

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Respondents in the study area

Result in Table 1 showed the distribution of respondents according to socioeconomic characteristics. According to the table, majority of the respondent (70.4%) were male, while 29.6% were female and they were largely within the age bracket of 31-45. This implies that majority of the respondents in Ogoja agricultural zone were dominated by male respondents and fell within the active aged of 31-45 years. The gender distribution shows a clear dominance of males in the sample population, which suggest limited female participation or access, highlighting potential gender inequality that could inform gender-sensitive policies and inclusive program design. The majority of respondents fall within the 31-45 age group, a productive and economically active segment of the population. The significant proportion of younger respondents (36.8%) indicates growing youth involvement or interest. A large proportion of respondents are married (nearly 70%), which may indicate a stable family structure that can influence decision-making patterns, income allocation, or responsibilities in both community and economic activities. Marital status may also affect attitudes toward certain interventions or social norms, such as technology adoption, health practices, or child education. The table also reveals a generally low level of educational attainment in the study area. The fact that only 0.4% of respondents have a university education is significant and may have direct implications for literacy, employment opportunities, and openness to innovation or change. This agrees with the finding of (Effiong et al., 2021) in the study on conflicts resolution in Cross River State, who affirmed that majority of the respondents were adults. The result also showed that most of the respondents were married (69.6%). This implies that most of the respondent in the study area were family household. This is similar to the findings of Akukwe, (2020) who reported that most respondents in South-east were married. The result further revealed that majority of the respondents had acquired formal education, (32.8% primary and 30% secondary education respectively). This speak to the fact that formal education needed in resolving communal conflicts (Effiong et al., 2024).

Socioeconomic causes of communal conflicts in the study area

The result in table 2 showed that, the causes of communal conflicts in the study area was poor means of livelihood amongst the inhabitants = 4.26: ranked the 1st. Criminal gang and cultist activities = 4.24: ranked 2nd, and hate speeches by religious leader = 4.15: ranked 3rd respectively. They study agreed with Otite (2013) (Ijioma et al., 2014), (Etim& Effiong 2022) who affirmed that the major causes of communal conflict in Nigeria include; Accusation and allegations of neglect, oppression, denomination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and bigotry. One will agree that youth restiveness in our various communities is caused as a result of idleness and hunger. Where there are good source of livelihoods, activities of hoodlum are equally cut down. The highest-ranked cause shows that poverty and unemployment are key triggers of communal conflict. This implies that economic empowerment and job creation initiatives could significantly reduce the incidence of conflict in these communities. The presence of criminal gangs and cult groups is a strong conflict driver. This highlights the urgent need for improved security, community policing, and youth re-orientation programs. It also suggests failure in youth engagement and control, requiring social and institutional interventions. Religious incitement contributes significantly to conflict. This underscores the role of religious leaders in either promoting peace or fueling division. The study also agrees with Abubakar, (2019) and Nkang, and Effiong (2015) who affirmed that most of the communal conflicts in Nigeria are caused partly by no land agreement, boundary and chieftaincy dispute but mainly by domination and oppression, frustration, aggression, displacement, divide and rule policies and diversionary scapegoat techniques. According to result in table 2, empowerment of youth with arms by politicians easily trigger conflicts = 4.0: ranked 7th, struggle for land in the community and neighboring villages = 3.46: ranked 8th and traditional rulers struggle for power was = 3.58: ranked 9th respectively in the study area. The result disagrees with Effiong and Enenyi (2023) who affirmed that Nigeria communities are traceable to land scarcity, territorial dispute and competition for the use of land resources which usually result to communal conflicts.

Table1: Distribution of respondents according to selected socioeconomic characteristics

Socioeconomic Characteristics	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender:	Male	176	70.40
	Female	74	29.60
Age:	Total	250	100.00
	1-30	92	36.80
	31-45	106	42.40
	> 45	52	20.80
Marital Status	Total	250	100.00
	Single	61	24.40
	Married	174	69.60
	Divorce	8	3.20
	Widow	7	2.80
	Total	250	100.00
Educational Attainment	No formal education	59	23.60
	Primary education	82	32.80
	Secondary	75	30.00
	College of Education	33	13.20
	University	1	.40
	Total	250	100.00

Source: Field survey data, 2025

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to socioeconomic causes of communal conflict in the study area.

S/N	Causes of Communal Conflicts	SA(5)	A(4)	D(3)	SD(2)	UN	Mea	Rank
1.	Encroachment into farmland by other people results to conflicts	83(415)	132 (528)	27(81)	5(10)	3	4.14	4 th
2.	Struggle for land in the community and neighboring communities generates conflicts	63(315)	55(220)	74(222)	51(102)	7	3.46	8 th
3.	Empowerment of youths with arms by politician easily triggers conflicts	87(435)	99(396)	51(153)	3(6)	10	4.0	7 th
4.	Conflicts are often caused by traditional rulers who struggle for power	65(325)	68(204)	68(204)	47(94)	2	3.58	9 th
5.	Criminal gang and cultist generate conflicts between communities	101(505)	108(432)	40(120)	1(2)	-	4.24	2 nd
6.	Hate messages by religious leaders cases conflicts	96(480)	117(468)	19(57)	15(30)	3	4.15	3 rd
7.	Poor/lack of means of livelihood in the community causes conflict	108(540)	110(440)	26(78)	-	-6	4.26	1 st
8.	Conflict in the community is caused by lack of food	63(315)	65(260)	66(198)	36(72)	20	3.46	8 th
9.	Cultural demands of one community may cause conflicts with another community	107(535)	101(404)	4(12)	24(48)	14	4.05	6 th
10.	High level illiteracy among young people encourages conflicts	92(460)	98(392)	49(147)	11(22)	-	4.08	4 th

Source: Field survey data, 2025

Conclusion

The study revealed that the major socioeconomic causes of communal conflicts in the study area were poor means of livelihoods among farmers, criminal gang/cultist activities, hate speeches and land disputes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

1. Socioeconomic needs assessment should be carried out in conflict zones of Ogoja Agricultural belt with a view to solving some of the socioeconomic needs of the people of that zone, such needs includes livelihood and literacy needs.
2. Farmers should be educated on peace and conflict management mechanism in to avert conflict situation in their domains.

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