

An assessment of the effectiveness of use of mediation by traditional institutions for resolving herders-farmers conflicts in Enugu state, Nigeria

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Abstract

A notable conflict in Nigeria today is the farmers-herders conflict. The objectives of this study were to: Ascertain the whether traditional institutions were involved in the resolution of farmers-herders conflict in Enugu State; and Examine the effectiveness of the use of mediation by traditional institutions in the resolution of farmers-herders conflict in Enugu State. The study adopted the survey research design. The population of the study comprised 712,303 adult residents of the selected communities in the three selected local government areas of Enugu State. The selected local government areas were Nkanu-East (Enugu East senatorial zone); Aninri (Enugu West senatorial zone; Uzo Uwani (Enugu North senatorial zone) from which communities prone to farmer-herders conflict were selected. The Taro Yamane formula was used to determine a sample size of 400 and the Bowley proportional formula for the allocation of the questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics while a one-sample t-test was used to test the hypotheses at a 5% level of significance. The result indicates that the use of mediation by traditional institutions had a significant positive effect on the resolution of farmers-herders conflicts in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study hereby recommended that mediation, as conflict resolution strategy should be continually applied.

Keywords: Mediation; Conflict Resolution; Traditional Institutions; Herders-farmers conflict

1. Introduction

It is required of every society to maximize its potential by using the diversity of its human resources following the predetermined goals. Conflict is thus certain to arise in every given community. Therefore, conflict is a universal phenomenon that is associated with every kind of social contact or group activity among individuals working towards a shared goal. Conflict is described as battles, disputes, disagreements, wars, quarrels, frustrations, and structural flaws that occur between and among people and groups in any given society (Ezenwoko & Osagie, 2014). Disagreements arising from human contact occur when individuals and groups see situations differently due to personal differences and rivalry for the distribution of societal resources.

The management of disputes in society requires the use of conflict resolution procedures. Conflict resolution, according to Rahim (2002), is a procedure designed to lessen, eliminate, or end conflict. Furthermore, it encompasses a wide variety of public relations tactics that come within the conflict resolution categories, such as mediation.

The conflict between farmers and herders is a prominent issue in Nigeria nowadays. In Nigeria, herder-farmer violence is now rampant in the Northwestern, Middle Belt, and, more lately, the Southern States (Leif, 2021). According to Akinrinade (2021), the majority of the nation's states are experiencing intolerable levels of herder-farmer violence.

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Conflicts between farmers and herders are becoming a major danger to Nigeria's overall security and socioeconomic progress.

Traditional institutions play a crucial role in Nigerian society's dispute-resolution given that they have a comprehensive understanding of the accepted traditional techniques and processes that have been handed down from one generation to the next. Additionally, traditional institutions possess a profound comprehension of the ethics, morality, and values of the community. Without a doubt, all societies acknowledged the need for traditional rulers to have some degree of authority to preserve security, govern, regulate, and settle disputes between people and groups, as well as to uphold law and order (Oyedele, 2007; Otite & Albert, 2009).

Considering that the fundamental purpose of traditional institutions is to protect the people's traditions, customs, and cultural heritage as well as to manage, resolve, and settle disputes that may arise within or between people in a community using the laws and customs specific to that community or society. To further solidify their relevance, the government has endowed them with favourable conditions as well as material and financial assistance, enabling them to serve as peace ambassadors within their local communities.

The review of extant literature shows that several studies have been carried out on the application of public relations conflict resolution strategies in developed countries with few conducted in developing countries like Nigeria. Hence, there is a paucity of empirical studies on the application of public relations strategies by traditional institutions in conflict resolution in the Nigerian context. Therefore, this current study aimed to fill the gap in the literature by investigating: (i) Whether traditional institutions played significant role in resolving farmers-herders conflicts in Enugu State, Nigeria; (ii) Ascertain the effectiveness of the use of mediation by traditional institutions in resolving farmers-herders conflicts in Enugu State, Nigeria.

2. Review of related literature

2.1. The Herdsmen

In Nigeria, the word 'herdsmen' is synonymous to 'Fulani herdsmen' – Fulani represents an ethnic group predominantly in the Northern Nigeria. They have their indigenous language known as 'Fulfulde', but because of their close-knit relationship with the Hausa tribe, the Fulanis have also adopted the Hausa language. The herdsmen are predominantly Muslims and are widely recognized for livestock keeping, particularly ruminants such as cattle, sheep and goats. Their women are very enterprising and work downstream in the dairy value chain. The Fulani herdsmen account for 90% of the livestock population in Nigeria which contribute about one-third of the agricultural GDP and approximately 3.2% of the entire country's GDP (NBS, 2023).

2.2. The Farmers

At the other side of the conflict, we have smallholder farmers who depend on their farming activities for their livelihoods. They constitute 80% of the total farmers in Nigeria (NBS, 2023). In addition to the incessant conflicts with herdsmen, they are facing other challenges including climate change, irregular rainfall, drought, pests and disease outbreaks. These hampers their yield and consequently, low profits. Farming communities in the North-Central panic at the glance of Fulani herdsmen. They have accused the herders of grazing their animals on their crops. And since they cannot depend on the government to provide adequate security, they mobilise the youths to form local vigilante groups with the aim of expelling the Fulani herdsmen out of their communities. Some states government like Ekiti, Benue, and Ondo, have implemented laws that banned herdsmen from open grazing. This policy further deepened the hostility between the herdsmen and their host communities.

2.3. The concept of Conflict

According to Acemough (2014), conflict is defined as the process of interaction that leads to disagreement, discord, or incompatibility amongst social units. It may also refer to actions taken by people or organisations that are contradictory to one another in an attempt to satisfy one another's needs, desires, or commitments. Conflict, on the other hand, may often arise anytime or anywhere incompatible behaviours take place and can lead to either character development or loss. A win-win scenario may also result from the management, transformation, and settlement of conflict. In addition, Heywood (2015) defined conflict as the rivalry between two opposed forces that represent a range of viewpoints, inclinations, requirements, and interests. Conventional interpretations of conflict define it as an opposition between parties seeking to neutralise, harm, or destroy their competitors in an exchange of values and claims to limited status, power, and resources (OnigunOtite & Albert, 2017).

Conflict also includes actions taken to express our thoughts, communicate our emotions, and have our wants met in a way that could make it more difficult for someone else to get what they need. One instance of this conflict activity may be a clear effort to create something at the cost of another person. It may be a power play. There might be violence. It might be harmful. In a similar vein, this conduct might be kind, helpful, and friendly. However, the goal of conflict conduct is to either express the conflict or have one's demands met, regardless of how it is expressed. Furthermore, the issue of reciprocation arises. A conflict's nature in one area greatly influences its character in the other two. Individuals may enter and exit conflicts quickly, and the intensity or nature of conflict can change constantly and quickly along all of its dimensions. Even while every one of the three dimensions influences the others, changes in one dimension's level of conflict do not always translate into changes in the other two. Frequently, a decline in one dimension is correlated with an increase in another (Mayer, 2001).

In essence, Nigerian society has been plagued by conflicts for many years. Folarin (2008) points out that several factors contribute to conflicts in Nigerian society, such as competing goals and interests that cannot be shared, attempts by one member of society to assume another member's legitimacy or status, inconsistent goals, growing desires for autonomy or authority among the various members of the community, a lack of resources to satisfy the necessities of the various members, and breakdowns in various forms of communication. According to Albert (2012), conflicts are categorised based on the agents that caused them: conflicts arising from competition for limited or scarce resources; conflicts resulting from perceived harm to our values, which can be expressed in our inclinations towards particular objects or lifestyles, ideologies, or religious beliefs; psychological needs of individuals and groups regarding internal and external contradictions; and manipulation of information that could be employed to provoke conflict or promote peace. It is thus vital to implement steps to reduce the frequency of disputes in society since their detrimental impacts are immense and unquantifiable (Hamisu, Makinta, Muhammed, Garba & Umar, 2017).

2.3.1. Herdsmen-Farmers Conflict

Herdsmen-Farmers conflict is as old as the existence of man. It started from the children (Cain and Abel) of the first man (Adam). Abel was a shepherd and Cain was a farmer according to Bible's account, however, Cain killed Abel in the field out of jealousy. Okoro (2018) averred that herdsmen-farmer or harder-farmer conflicts are conflicts occurring between peasant farmers or subsistence cultivators and nomadic or transhumant livestock keepers. According to Hagmann (2003), there exist differences between 'herder-herder' conflicts and 'farmer-herder' conflicts. He maintained that herder-herder conflicts are usually conflicts between nomadic or transhumant livestock keepers that arise between receiving groups over their territory's resources and incoming groups searching for water and pastures, and cattle raiding. Herder-herder conflict is a conflict that results from theft of cattle or other animals among the Fulani herdsmen. It is herdsmen rustling cattle of other herdsmen, or when un-experienced herders entrust their animals in the care of experienced herders under agreements, and when such agreements are breached conflict occasions within. The violent cattle raids among pastoralists in East Africa are examples of herder-herder conflicts. Hussein, Sumberg, and Seddon, (1999) see farmer-herder conflicts as comprising different types of conflicts, including ethnic conflicts, interest conflicts, resource disputes, political action, evictions, killings, cattle raiding and cattle rustling.

2.4. Conflict Resolution

Resolution of a conflict is the process by which two or more parties involved in a disagreement come to an amicable agreement on how to proceed (Rafferty, 2017). Miller (2003) defines conflict resolution as a range of methods aimed at ending a crisis using the constructive resolution of problems, different from management or transformation of conflict". Furthermore, it is a procedure through which such a result is attained. (Jaja et al, 2011).

According to Augsburg (1992), conflict resolution refers to the procedures and tactics used to help a disagreement resolve peacefully. Typically, this involves group members starting a compromise discussion or exchanging ideas with one another. Stated differently, the goal of conflict resolution is to intervene to influence or promote the settlement of a disagreement. To reduce the extent, severity, and impact of disputes, conflict resolution provides an opportunity to communicate with the parties involved. Conflict resolution exercises facilitate the analysis of viewpoints and perspectives as a basis for identifying solutions to crises and divergent points of view in both official and informal gatherings. Therefore, communication is crucial to resolving any disagreement, and this is where the media comes in helpful (Bannon, 2003).

Conflict resolution has also been described as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of a conflict usually in the shapes of the group or members initiating a compromising dialogue or ideologies with the rest of the group (Augsburger, 1992). Put differently, conflict resolution is important and aimed at intervention to change or facilitate the constructive, and friendly. But, no matter its tone, the object of conflict behaviour is either to express the conflict or to have one's needs satisfied. More so, the question of giving back happens. The nature of a conflict in one

aspect hugely affects its nature in the other two aspects. People can go rapidly in and out of conflict, and the strength or character of conflict along each aspect can alter fast and always. Despite that each of the three aspects affects the others, an alteration in the extent of conflict in one aspect does not necessarily result in the same change in the other dimension. Often a rise in one aspect is related to a decrease in another dimension (Mayer, 2001).

In summary, conflict resolution may be seen as a process of problem-solving intended to provide parties with an amicable opportunity to resolve their differences. This procedure sometimes calls for the involvement of outside parties who use techniques meant to improve communication between the parties involved in the dispute. In light of this research, conflict resolution refers to the actions taken by the selected Nigerian states in cooperation with those tasked with resolving the ongoing dispute between herders and farmers.

2.5. The Concept of Mediation

A public relations tactic for settling disputes among communities is mediation. Through mediation, the dispute is resolved by the involvement of a third party. The public relations specialist pushes for a resolution between the opposing parties. The public relations specialist will work feverishly to sway and convince the other side to engage in talks. The disagreement will be resolved by effective use of public relations by the mediation parties, who often consist of public relations specialists and powerful community or religious leaders from both sides. When Catholic Church leaders intervened in the 1995 war settlement between Umuode and Oruku in the state of Enugu, this strategy was effective.

2.6. Theoretical Review

This research is hinged on the African Renaissance Theory. The African Renaissance Theory was created to resolve the shortcomings of dependence theory and modernization in the context of African development issues such as wars and the many security issues plaguing the continent. Modernization theory has a flaw in that it considers metropolitan nations to be better and proposes that problems affecting African governments should be solved from a Western perspective. As a result, it disregards Africans' inventiveness and initiative. According to Matunhu (2011), African Renaissance Theory promotes regional solutions to African issues. This is predicated on the fact that many African countries are pluralistic. Therefore, it is thought that depending on local resources, especially cultural norms is a crucial strategy for reestablishing lives and ensuring democracy, peace, and prosperity.

The idea, which aims to address the majority of communal issues in African countries, is very pertinent to comprehending the powerful role that traditional institutions play in regulating disputes between farmers and herders. For instance, the dispute between farmers and pastoralists may be comprehended and resolved by using conventional techniques for peacemaking and mediation. Put another way, since Africans have particular ways of handling conflict that are in line with their traditions and customs, the problems arising from the conflict between farmers and pastoralists may be addressed by determining its underlying causes. Furthermore, Olaniran and Arigu (2013) assert that sociocultural norms and values ingrained in conventional institutions have persisted as essential components of all African organised societies. This is because established cultural norms and values are not only an essential human survival skill but also the cornerstone of any civilised community. Above all, they establish order, which raises awareness of legal compliance in society.

2.7. Review of related Empirical Studies

In Bade Local Government Area, Yobe State, Nigeria, Kiraji and Umar (2023) reviewed the function of traditional institutions in resolving disputes between farmers and herders. Using Yamane's method, 400 farmers and herders from 25 communities were sampled. Interviews, focus groups, key informant interviews, field observations, and the Likert scale were used to gather data. Data for this research were gathered by an organised questionnaire and interview schedule, and descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) and the Pairwise Ranking tool were utilised for analysis. The findings showed that (89.3%) of the respondents thought that the traditional institutions' recommendations, when combined with those of all village stakeholders, should be followed to prevent conflicts between herders and landowners in the study area. These recommendations are for the traditional rulers to hold regular or yearly meetings with farmers and herders. A constitutional change should also reinforce established institutions, restoring to them the authority to resolve disputes in rural regions that the 1976 Local Government Reform had taken away.

The impact of traditional institutions on farmer-herder conflict resolution was evaluated by Mohammed, Sa'adu, and Faruq (2017) in three Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Borno State, Nigeria: Damboa, Jere, and Magumeri. Farmers (150) and herders (75) comprised the 225 sample size respondents chosen by a multistage sampling process. The research used a systematic questionnaire and interview schedule to gather data, which was then analysed using the

PRA (Pairwise Ranking) tool and descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage). The findings showed that the majority of respondents (89.3%) thought that traditional institutions were the best means of resolving disputes between farmers and herders in the research region. According to the results, farmers placed compensation as the top method of resolving conflicts, whereas herders placed it second. To prevent conflicts between the farmers and herders in the region, the research suggests that the traditional rulers, working with other village stakeholders, organise regular or yearly meetings with the farmers and herders. A constitutional change should also reinforce established institutions, restoring to them the authority to resolve disputes in rural regions that the 1976 Local Government Reform had taken away.

Umundadi (2011) examined the activities of youths, mediators and negotiators in various oil-producing communities and oil companies in Delta State. Nine participants were selected from the institutions in Delta State and two resource persons were appointed from the Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF). The research questions were on the methods utilized in dispute resolution in the Niger Delta, and on the mediation and negotiation methods for dispute resolution and their uses in the Niger Delta. The hypothesis was formulated on the significant differences between the opinions of male and female participants on knowledge gained from workshops/training organized for the participants by PTDF. Questionnaires and oral interviews were also used. The research questions were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation and t-test. The results of the study revealed that the mediation method should be adopted in tackling disputes in the Niger Delta. It also revealed that multinational companies are faced with huge difficulties concerning handling the anger of the locals. Some of these problems have manifested in the form of kidnapping of oil company experts, and tort claims. Based on these findings recommendations were made that PTDF should train personnel for the onerous task of dispute resolution.

Some (2012) examine the dynamics of conflict resolution through third-party mediation focusing on negotiations carried out as a result of the post-election violence in Kenya in 2007/8. The study objectives are; to examine the effectiveness of mediation in managing conflict in Kenya, to determine the various types of mediation processes used in management of the post electoral dispute in Kenya and to determine cultural and ethnic differences and degree of homogeneity that affects the success or failure of mediation in the effort of managing conflict in Kenya. Mediation is gaining popularity all over the world and Kenya is not an exception. Third parties might act as consultants, helping one side or both sides analyze the conflict and plan an effective response. Alternatively, they act as facilitators, arranging meetings, setting agendas, and guiding productive discussions. Kenyans have always held this myth of seeing Kenya 'as an island of peace in a sea of chaos and could hardly think of the possibility of a full-scale conflict. The underlying factors of ethnicity, poverty, discrimination land problems and political intolerance played out during the 2007 elections. Dispute management research has not often compared the effectiveness of mediation as a tool. Consequently, applying conflict management techniques to international disputes has sometimes not been effective. This study used both primary and secondary data from available data in Nairobi and other university libraries and internet sources which were analysed by trying to explore and to get explanations that led to the outbreak and trends of the conflict in Kenya while secondary data used text books, journals, and academic papers that are to be found in the University of Nairobi and other libraries. This instrument of data collection enables the researcher to control the setting; it is flexible as one can probe and in the process get in-depth information. The research design used in this study was descriptive and exploratory in nature method. This study presented a detailed background of mediation as a mode of conflict resolution. The finding indicated that the mediation process is inherently unpredictable, and the mediator must try to constantly reassess, remain open to ambiguity, and offer new options when necessary. This study notes that mediators are useful in the process of conflict abatement, and they can make positive and direct contributions by focusing the parties on a termination agreement. Further, it notes that the success of third-party mediation is dependent on the credibility of the mediators and the level of commitment by the parties. The literature on mediation spans several academic fields including, but not limited to, traditional political science and international relations, labour and industrial relations and management studies. The mediator should always do his best to make himself acceptable to the parties to conflict at all times. When the post-election conflict began in Kenya, it was immediately so violent a conflict that the solution was also as urgent.

Umezulike and Ugochukwu (2021) investigated the roles of traditional rulers in community conflict management in Imo State. The study primarily assessed the levels of use of some strategies by traditional rulers in managing conflicts in their communities. Hence the study raised 3 specific objectives that guided the study. The research employed a descriptive survey design carried out in selected autonomous communities in Imo State. The study randomly and purposively sampled 150 traditional rulers from a population of 864. The study used a researcher-made questionnaire titled "Assessment of Roles of Traditional Rulers in Community Conflict Management Questionnaire" (ARTICCMQ) to elicit relevant information from the respondents. The study revealed that traditional rulers agreed on the use of compromise and collaborating strategies in community conflict management strategies, also they agreed on the challenges encountered in the course of managing conflict in their communities. Based on the findings, the study

recommended that the powers and authorities of traditional rulers should emanate from the constitution. The study also concluded that there is a need for interaction with relevant stakeholders in the communities to reduce conflict and effectively manage conflicts in communities.

Onyedokun and Lawal (2017) investigated the participation of community leaders in conflict resolution and management among farmers and herdsman in Oyo state, Nigeria. A stratified and random sampling technique was used to select 180 community leaders from 25 communities in Orire Local Government Area of Oyo State. Data were structured interview schedules and Focus Group Discussions collected through the use of the data collected were summarized and analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, standard deviation) and Pearson Product Moment Correlation respectively. Results show that competition over water (93.8%), land (94.4%), lack of grazing zones (77.2%), and the aggressive nature of the parties involved (77.2%) were the main causes of conflicts among respondents. Conflict resolution measures mainly adopted by the community leaders include dialogue with parties involved (84.4%), use of village committees (76.7%), negotiating settlement (67.2%), entering agreement and ensuring such agreement is implemented (71.1%) and use of law enforcement agencies (84.4%). The level of participation of community leaders in conflict resolution was however moderate. Major constraints to effective participation of community leaders in conflict resolution include lack of institutional support from government (mean=3.0), inadequate finance (mean=3.0), language barrier (mean=3.0) and evasive nature of the herdsman (mean=3.0). Years of schooling ($r=0.223$; $p \leq 0.05$) were found to be positively and significantly correlated with participation in conflict resolution. The study recommended the need for local leaders and the government to work together and take more proactive measures to reduce the current level of conflict in conflict-prone areas. It also suggested the need to broaden local leaders' knowledge base through the provision of training in conflict handling.

To determine whether Extension may have a role in managing conflict between farmers and herders, Adisa (2011) focused her research on the perceptions of conflict and coping mechanisms among farmers and herdsman. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from 300 farmers and 60 cattle ranchers who were chosen for the study using a multi-stage cluster random selection procedure. While 68% of herders saw the dispute as a danger, the majority of farmers (78%) saw it as a "loss." Furthermore, 75% of farmers reported using "problem-oriented" coping mechanisms, while 73% of herders reported using "emotion-oriented" coping mechanisms. Alternatively, 'social-support' techniques were used by 7% of herders and 62% of farmers. According to Pearson correlations, the significant correlates of loss perception among farmers were annual income ($r=0.773$, $p=0.001$), farm size ($r=0.82$, $p=0.002$), non-farm income ($r=-0.71$, $p=0.003$), and household size ($r=0.651$, $p=0.004$); the significant correlates of threat perception among herdsman were age ($r=0.611$, $p=0.033$) and herd size ($r=0.814$, $p=0.002$). Moreover, a mere 4% of the whole sample considered the conflict scenario to be a "possibility to benefit." The article advocates the formation of a three-tiered committee to regulate disagreements between farmer-herdsman and says that farmer-herdsman in Nigeria do not have to become as rigid as they now seem. The report suggests that Extension has a functional role in improving client and staff knowledge of and adherence to stock routes, revising them regularly, and teaching them proper coping strategies to lessen the socio-psychological impacts of disputes.

Mohammed, Saadu and Faruqi (2017) assessed the influence of traditional institutions in Farmer-Herder conflict management in three selected Local Government Areas (Damboa, Jere and Magumeri LGAs) of Borno State, Nigeria. A multistage 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 the PRA (Pair wise Ranking) tool. The results revealed that (89.3%) of the respondents believe that, the most preferred strategies for managing conflicts between farmers and herders in the study area are the traditional institutions. However, the study recommends 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, returning their power to adjudicate conflict in the rural areas which had been taken away by the 1976 Local Government Reform.

Jooji (2022) investigated the functions of traditional rulers in Kogi State, and the obstacles they face in preventing and resolving conflicts. The study's data were gathered from a variety of secondary sources, including textbooks, journals, and other online resources. The data was then analysed using content analysis. This research found that traditional rulers in Kogi state required to be transformed for them to play a more significant role in security-related affairs. Previously, they only served as vehicles of conflict resolution; now, they must also act as security commanders. The limitations placed on traditional rulers in carrying out some crucial tasks that will address the escalating violence in conflicts arising from land and other chieftaincy matters is one of the main concerns. Overall, this research suggests that the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 constitution includes a clause recognising the traditional rulers' role in

preventing and resolving conflicts. This will, among other things, make the majority of the conventional rules' approaches to preventing and resolving conflicts within their area legitimate.

In Kwara State, Nigeria, Aliyu, Issa, Okafor, and Adika (2020) investigated the functions of traditional rulers in resolving disputes. The state's traditional rulers made up the studied population. The research used a descriptive survey design, and 180 traditional ruler members were chosen at random using a basic sampling method. To gather information from the respondents, the researchers created the Roles of Traditional Rulers in Conflict Resolution Questionnaire. The study's conclusions demonstrated the many roles that traditional rulers play in resolving conflicts in all of their complexities. The research also showed that age and marital status had no discernible impact on the traditional rulers' duties in resolving conflicts. In light of the study's findings, it was advised that the state's traditional leaders become knowledgeable about the matters that matter to both individuals and social groups and offer potential solutions to disputes that may arise to strengthen and support long-term democracy in the community.

In their 2019 study, Hamz, Siramurugan, and Razlini investigate the role traditional leaders play in reducing violent outbursts and promoting harmony and peace in Nigeria. The majority of the secondary data included in the research came from books, newspapers, journals, and other sources. Content analysis was used in the data analysis scenario. The results show that by stepping in to mediate disputes like farmer/herder disputes, the Niger-Delta crisis, and other issues, traditional leaders contribute significantly to the decrease of violent crimes and the improvement of peace and harmony. Lastly, the report recommends that the government include more traditional leaders in peace negotiations and conflict resolution to empower them.

3. Methodology

The descriptive research design was adopted for this study. To effectively achieve this, the survey method was used to elicit data from the respondents. The data for this study were obtained from the primary source using a survey for further analysis. This study was carried out in the three senatorial zones of Enugu state, Nigeria. One local government area was selected from each of the senatorial zones. The selected LGAs are predominantly rural communities whose dwellers are mostly farmers

Table 1 List of the local government areas and communities in the study

| S/No | Senatorial Zone | Local Government Area | Communities |
|------|-----------------|-----------------------|--|
| 1 | Enugu East | Nkanu-East | Ihuokpara, Akpawfu, Amagunze, Amauzam, Owo, Oruku, Ugbawka, Nkerefi, Nume, Nburubu, Nara, Ogbahu, Amechi-Idodo |
| 2 | Enugu West | Aninri | Ndeabo, Oduma, Nenwe, Mpu, Okpanku, |
| 3 | Enugu North | UzoUwani | Umulokpa, Nimbo, Abbi, Ugbenu, Nkpologu, Uvuru, Nrobo, Adani, Okpogu, Ukpata |

Source: Researcher's compilation

The target population of this study comprises all the adult people dwelling in the three selected local government areas. These include the farmers, herders and traditional rulers. The 2024 projected total population of adults in the three selected local government areas is 712,303. This was based on the 3.2% annual increase in the Nigerian population adopted by the National Population Commission.

In determining the sample size, because the population is known the researcher used the Taro Yamane formula of sample size determination.

Formula:

$$\text{Thus: } n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

$$N = \text{Population} = 712,303$$

$e = \text{Margin of error} = 5\%$

$n = \text{Sample size} = ?$

$$n = \frac{712,303}{1 + 712,303(0.05)^2} = 400$$

Therefore, the sample size for the study is 400.

Since this study covers three local government areas, the stratified sampling technique was adopted initially. Therefore, the sample was shared among the LGAs proportional based on their population. After that, the purposive sampling technique was used to draw sample respondents so that the various units of analysis in the study were adequately included. These include the residents, traditional rulers, farmers and herders.

The questionnaire and interview were used to collect data from respondents in this study. The Likert scale was designed to enable respondents to indicate the extent to which they agree/disagree with each statement or item concerning the identified variables in this study. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents through direct administration.

A pilot study was conducted to subject the research instrument to some forms of scrutiny and to discover any problems with it before full-scale use. The pilot study involved the distribution of 50 copies of the questionnaire to sample respondents in one of the selected LGAs to pretest the questionnaire and enable the performance of validity and reliability tests. The research instrument was validated by three research experts and experienced academics in this area of study to ensure content validity. The data generated from the pilot study were subjected to construct reliability statistics using Cronbach's Alpha. The alpha coefficient of 0.75 was obtained. Hence the instrument is deemed reliable.

The data collected in this study were presented and analyzed for better understanding and for drawing valid conclusions. Descriptive statistics were applied initially to present the percentage, mean and standard deviation. Later on, the one-sample t-test was used to test the hypotheses at a 5% level of significance.

4. Data analysis and discussion of result

Table 2 Bio Data of Respondents

| S/No | Characteristics | Respondent Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Age | 18-25 years | 39 | 10.7 |
| | | 26-35 years | 93 | 25.5 |
| | | 36-45 years | 179 | 49.0 |
| | | Above 45 years | 54 | 14.8 |
| | | Total | 365 | 100 |
| 2 | Gender | Male | 299 | 81.9 |
| | | Female | 66 | 18.1 |
| | | Total | 365 | 100 |
| 3 | Marital Status | Single | 42 | 11.5 |
| | | Married | 287 | 78.6 |
| | | Divorced | 21 | 5.8 |
| | | Widowed | 15 | 4.1 |
| | | Total | 365 | 100 |
| 4 | Profession | Traditional Ruler | 6 | 1.6 |
| | | Community Member | 104 | 28.5 |
| | | Farmer | 240 | 65.8 |

| | | | | |
|---|------------------|------------|-----|------|
| 5 | Local Government | Herder | 15 | 4.1 |
| | | Total | 365 | 100 |
| | | Nkanu-East | 125 | 34.2 |
| | | Aniri | 118 | 32.3 |
| | | Uzu-Uwani | 122 | 33.4 |
| | | Total | 365 | 100 |
| | | | | |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4.2 above shows the profile of the respondents in the study. 29 respondents, representing 10.7% have an age distribution of 18-25 years; 93 respondents, constituting 25.5% have an age distribution of 26-35 years; 179 respondents, accounting for 49.0% have an age distribution of 36-45; and 54 respondents, making up 14.8% have the age distribution of above 45 years. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are in their productive age of 36-45 years. 299 respondents, constituting 81.9% are male; 56 respondents, making up 18.1% are female. This means that the study has a higher representation of male respondents compared to female respondents. 42 respondents, comprising 11.5% are single; 287 respondents, making up 78.6% are married; 21 respondents, accounting for 5.8% are divorced; 15 respondents, accounting for 4.1% are widowed. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are married. 6 respondents, constituting 1.6% were traditional rulers; 104 respondents, making up 28.5% were community members; 240 respondents, accounting for 65.8% were farmers; 15 respondents, accounting for 4.1% were herders. This indicates that the various stakeholders in the conflict and its resolution were included in the study, though farmers accounted for the majority of the respondents. 125 respondents, constituting 34.2% were from Nkanu-East local government area; 118 respondents, making up 32.3% were from Aninri local government area; 122 respondents, accounting for 33.5% were from Uzo-Uwani local government area; The distribution across different local government area is evenly distributed.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics

| Items | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---------------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|--------|----------------|
| Being very neutral | 365 | 1 | 5 | 3.86 | .829 |
| Hosting meetings | 365 | 1 | 5 | 3.99 | .874 |
| Bringing the parties to talk | 365 | 1 | 5 | 3.96 | .824 |
| Seeking the intervention of mediators | 365 | 1 | 5 | 3.94 | 1.002 |
| MEDIATION | 365 | 1.75 | 5.00 | 3.9356 | .69459 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 365 | | | | |
| | | | | | |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The result shows mean scores above 3.8 for all the items and 3.94 for overall (all the items were aggregated). This reveals a strong use of mediation in all the locations by the respondents in managing farmer-header crises.

4.1. Test of Hypotheses

The null hypotheses formulated to guide the study was tested using the One-sample t-test at a 5% level of significance as shown in the tables below. The overall mean of each of the variable was compared to a value of 3 which represents the mean of the range of scores (5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 for strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree respectively).

Table 4 One-Sample Statistics

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|-----------|-----|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| MEDIATION | 365 | 3.9356 | 0.69459 | 0.03636 |

Table 5 One-Sample T-Test

| | Test Value = 3 | | | | | |
|-----------|----------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|---|--------|
| | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| MEDIATION | 25.735 | 364 | 0.000 | 0.93562 | 0.8641 | 1.0071 |

The research hypothesis states that *'The use of mediation by traditional institutions has no significant effect in the resolution of farmers–herders conflict in Enugu State'*. The results in Table 4 show a mean score of 3.9356 for mediation which is above 3. Also, table 5 shows that Mediation at a P-value of 0.000 which is below 0.05 is statistically significant. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, the use of mediation by traditional institutions has a significant effect in the resolution of farmers–herders conflict in Enugu State.

This implied that *the intervention of traditional institutions as neutral third person or mediator in the dispute to assist the farmer and herders to jointly arrive at an acceptable resolution of issues* reduced the farmers–herders conflict in Enugu State, Nigeria. This finding aligns with that of Eze (2021) who found that mediation was significantly effective in resolving conflicts between herders and farmers in Benue State, Nigeria. It also agrees with Obasi (2022) who also found out mediation was effective in the fight against insurgencies in North-East Nigeria.

5. Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the use of mediation by traditional institutions in the resolution of farmers–herders conflict in Enugu State, Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, we conclude that the use of mediation by traditional institutions was very effective in the resolution of farmers–herders conflict in Enugu State, Nigeria. It has formed a good reference material for researchers and academics at different levels and fields. We hereby recommend that the traditional institutions *should continually intervene as neutral third parties or mediators in the dispute to assist the farmer and herders to jointly arrive at an acceptable resolution of issues*. This would greatly reduce the farmers–herders conflict in Enugu State, Nigeria.

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