



FACTOR ANALYSIS OF CAUSES OF COMMUNAL CONFLICTS IN BENUE AND NASARAWA STATES, NORTH-CENTRAL, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated some factors associated with communal conflicts from the perspectives of farmers from Benue and Nasarawa States, North-Central Nigeria. The specific objectives were: to determine the estimated social and economic losses suffered by farmers from communal conflicts, and to; identify the underlying causes of communal conflicts in the study area. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to obtain a sample size of 391 farmers. Information was elicited using questionnaire and interview schedule and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The result revealed that farmers experienced social and economic losses in monetary terms in the areas of crop, livestock and other social assets. Factor analysis showed that the underlying causes of communal conflicts in the study area were: ethnic factors (Eigen-value of 4.24), cultural factors (Eigen-value of 2.880), Infrastructural factors (Eigen-value of 2.038), population pressure factors (Eigen-value of 1.829), social factors (Eigen-value of 1.502), Institutional factors (Eigen-value of 1.481). The study recommended among others that government should make the right political decisions and policies that will ensure proper management of land resources in the event of population explosion and increasing competition for land resources to ensure that communal conflicts does not erupt in the process.

Keywords: Benue, Communal Conflicts; Extension workers; Agricultural Development Programmes, Nasarawa.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria as a heterogeneous society in terms of ethnic, religious and cultural pluralism is prone to communal conflicts. Over the last 50 years of Nigeria's political independence, the country has been confronted with varied forms of communal conflicts. These conflicts have affected the foundation of Nigeria unity and corporate existence. Ekong (2003) identified the dominant causes of communal conflicts in Nigeria in addition to poverty and unemployment, to also include dysfunctional structural divide and discrimination at various levels of state and society, all of which impact adversely on issues of employment, promotion and public appointments. Also noteworthy are issues of group and community relations and land rights, often linked to the problem of indigene-ship.

Dunmoye (2003) maintains that land or boundary disputes are a major factor leading to communal conflicts in the middle-belt region of the country, implying that crises are triggered by scarcity of production factors occasioned by rising population pressure, land alienation or concentration of land in the hands of a few. Communal conflicts in the country are aggravated by economic crisis while ethnicity, religious differences and their manipulation, land hunger and increasing population, chieftaincy disputes and the "native/settler" syndrome are major causes.



According to Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR, 2003), conflicts in Nigeria and specifically in the North-Central region are driven largely by ethnic plurality, acute competition for political and traditional power, in addition to land ownership tussles, all of which are underpinned by systemic issues of access to economic resources and opportunities. Moreover, high poverty and unemployment levels and general limitations to alternative economic opportunities and bad governance are central to the phenomenon. Thus, mass poverty and unemployment are identified as fundamental underlying forces which create conflicts in Nigeria and this is particularly the case with ethnic conflicts. This is because poverty and unemployment tend to encourage frustration, divisiveness, alienation and insecurity, all of which promote the preference to seek some sort of social security in ethnic nationalities, with the belief that other groups are responsible for the misery. In the same vein, Wani and Suwirta (2013) also identified the following factors as the major causes of communal conflicts in North-Central Zone of Nigeria: minority politics and the agitation for middle belt region; politics of ethnicity/land; stranger elements/ settlers or better known as non-indigenes; chieftaincy matters; poverty, and; politics.

According to Tukur (2014), communal conflicts involving transhumant pastoralists, particularly the Fulani's and host communities in Nigeria has assumed a very wide and dangerous dimension in recent times. This is due to the movement of pastoralist southwards in search of pasture, farming and occupation of traditional grazing areas and stock routes, pastoralist fleeing one conflict zone into another without prior notice, thus triggering fresh conflicts.

In West Africa, and Nigeria in particular, the Fulani cattle pastoralist have forfeited and resisted the pleasures and hazards of modernity and instead chosen to remain conservatively glued to their animals in the bush. Their place of abode is dictated by the grazing appetite of their animals. This explains their mobile and nomadic status. As a result of their movements in search of grazing pastures most times, they cross the paths of crop producers, herein referred to as farmers, who find fault in the destruction of their crops by pastoralists. To the farmers in these communities, land is a heritage that must be protected especially when it is harbouring their crops even at the point of death. To the Fulani nomads, the same land is not only a grazing ground for their animals but a claimed defined route for their seasonal nomadic migrations. It is as a result of this unavoidable interaction that result in to serious animosity with a consequence of violence and outright breach of law and order. The aftermath of such unavoidable contact is usually a conflict or outright bloodletting (Moritz, 2010).

Zirra and Garba (2006) noted that in the course of these seasonal migrations in search for pasture that pastoralist collide with the farmers who find it difficult watching their farm crops being destroyed by the animals. The authors further stated that the hostility and outright breakup of the conflict between these groups in the affected areas in recent times can be traced to a number of factors: (a). Lack of clearly defined constitutional roles of traditional rulers in conflict resolution (b). Increased demand for land by farmers (Blench, 2010). (c). Lack of Confidence in the Judicial System (Tukur, 2014). (d). The Emergence of a Third Migrant Group of Resource Users (Zirra and Garba, 2006).

Other causes as identified by Blench (2010) include; the encroachment on traditional livestock migratory routes, cultivation of traditional grazing areas, dry season cultivation of riverine areas and valleys in Northern Nigeria encouraged by the Federal Government of Nigeria, *Fadama* projects, land grabs by very rich traditional/political merchant elites, political attachment to land as political tool to gain access to power has accentuated the conflict, climate change, insurgency among others. This conflict is now been subsumed into a broader dichotomy of religion and disputes over access to resources are now framed in religious and



political terms. Increasing availability of modern weapons has increased the intensity and violence of these disputes.

The study examined the underlying factors responsible for communal conflicts in the study area. The specific objectives were: to determine the estimated social and economic losses suffered by farmers from communal conflicts, and to; identify the underlying causes of communal conflicts in the study area.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Benue and Nasarawa States, North-Central, Nigeria. North Central Zone of the country occupies a total land area of 296,898 km² representing about 32% of the land area of the country. It is located between latitudes 6° 30' to 11° 20' North and longitudes 2° 30' to 10° 30' East (Adzenga, 2019). More than 77% of the people in the region are mostly engaged in one form of agricultural activity or the other.

A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in selecting farmers from the two States. In the first stage, seven (7) LGAs that recorded high incidences of communal conflicts were purposively selected (4 out of 23 LGAs from Benue State and three out of 13 LGAs from Nasarawa State). The second stage involved purposive selection of 11 extension blocks from the selected LGAs, i.e., eight (8) extension blocks from Benue State and three (3) extension blocks from Nasarawa State). In the third stage, 24 extension cells that have experienced recurrent communal conflicts were purposively selected 15 cells from Benue State and nine (9) cells from Nasarawa State). Also, 24 villages with high prevalence of communal conflicts 15 villages from Benue and nine (9) villages from Nasarawa States) were purposively selected. Thereafter, the Taro Yamane formula for determination of sample size (Miller and Brewer, 2003) was used to randomly select 279 farmers from Benue State and 114 farmers from Nasarawa State, making a total of 393 farmers.

Data used for the study were obtained from primary sources. Primary data were collected with the use of structured questionnaire and interview schedule which elicited information from the farmers. Data generated from the study were analysed using a combination of both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Frequency distribution, percentages and mean were used to achieve objectives (i) while Factor analysis was used to achieve objective (ii).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Estimated social and economic losses from communal conflicts

Table 1 shows the estimated social assets and economic losses suffered by respondents in monetary terms in areas prone to communal conflicts in the study area. The result indicated that mean value of crop losses by respondents in Benue was ₦1,940,124.60 compared to ₦323,359.70 for farmers in Nasarawa State. This was an indication that respondents in Benue State suffered more crop losses during communal conflicts than their counterparts in Nasarawa State. The pooled result revealed that mean value of crop losses in the study area was ₦1,468,740.41. Table 1 revealed that the mean monetary value of livestock (cattle, sheep, goats, and poultry) losses by respondents in areas prone to conflict in Benue State was ₦100,126.35, while that of Nasarawa was ₦78,956.14. These findings also point to the fact that farmers in Benue State experienced more livestock losses than farmers in Nasarawa State. On the whole, Table 1 showed that the mean value of livestock losses during communal conflicts in the study area was ₦93,953.96.

The mean value of losses of other social assets (including properties like houses, household items, farm tools among others) by respondents in Benue State was ₦1,087,700.40 as



against ₦493,447.40 for respondents in Nasarawa State. This result implied that farmers in areas prone to communal conflicts in Benue State suffered more losses in terms of social assets than their counterparts in Nasarawa State. This is attributed to the frequency of occurrence of conflicts in Benue than in Nasarawa State. The pooled result as shown revealed that the mean value of losses of other social assets by respondents in the study area was ₦914,439.90. This result suggests that respondents in the study area incur more losses in terms of crop and social assets than in livestock. This finding collaborates with that of Chukwuma and Atelhe (2014) and Mercy Corps (2015) that communal conflicts have resulted in dire humanitarian, social, economic, and socio-economic consequences with agriculture including crop farming, livestock rearing and trade sectors experiencing heavy losses.



Table 1. Estimated social and economic losses from communal conflicts

Variable (₦)	Benue (n = 277)		Nasarawa (n = 114)		Pooled (n = 391)	
	Frq.	%	Frq.	%	Frq.	%
1-99	29	10.50	9	7.90	38	9.71
100-199	26	9.40	16	14.0	42	10.74
200-299	39	14.10	44	38.6	83	21.22
300-399	29	10.50	19	16.7	48	12.27
400-499	21	7.50	8	7.00	29	7.41
500-599	23	8.30	10	8.80	33	8.43
600-699	2	0.70	2	1.80	4	1.02
700-799	9	3.20	0	0.00	9	2.30
800-899	8	2.90	1	0.90	9	2.30
900-999	1	0.40	0	0.00	1	0.25
>1,000,000	90	32.50	5	4.30	95	24.29
Mean		1,940,124.60		323,359.70		1,468,740.1
Livestock Losses (₦'000)						
1-99	74	26.71	87	76.31	161	41.17
100-199	93	33.57	12	10.52	105	26.85
200-299	26	9.38	7	6.14	33	8.43
300-399	13	4.69	1	0.87	14	3.58
400-499	4	1.44	1	0.87	5	1.27
500-599	10	3.61	5	4.38	15	3.83
600-699	3	1.08	0	0.00	3	0.76
700-799	2	0.72	1	0.87	3	0.76
800-899	1	0.36	0	0.00	1	0.25
900-999	2	0.72	0	0.00	2	0.51
>1000,000	49	17.68	0	0.00	49	12.53
Mean (Naira)		100,126.35		78,956.14		93,953.96
Other Social Assets (houses, house hold items, farm tools, other properties) (₦'000)						
1-99	37	13.35	9	7.89	46	11.76
100-199	33	11.91	10	8.77	43	10.99
200-299	21	7.58	19	16.66	40	10.23
300-399	13	4.69	12	10.52	25	6.39
400-499	8	2.88	12	10.52	20	5.11
500-599	23	8.30	21	18.42	44	11.25
600-699	7	2.52	5	4.38	12	3.06
700-799	27	9.74	11	9.64	38	9.71
800-899	9	3.24	3	2.63	12	3.06
900-999	6	2.16	0	0.00	6	1.53
>1000,000	93	33.57	12	10.52	105	26.85
Mean (Naira)		1,087,700.4		493,447.4		914,439.90

Source: Field survey, 2017

Analysis of Causes of Communal Conflicts

The result of factor analysis in Table 2 indicates the extracted factors based on the causes of communal conflicts in the study area. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test which measures the degree of inter-correlation among the variables and the appropriateness of



factor analysis has calibration value of 0.716 implying that the inter-correlation and appropriateness of variables were good for factor analysis (Williams *et al.*, 2010). Bartlett's test which tests statistical probability of whether the correlation matrix has a correlation among variables was an identity matrix (at the level of 0.000) indicating a significant relationship between the variables (Williams *et al.*, 2010).

The result of the principal component analysis using the varimax rotation method isolated 8 underlying or principal factors for each of the 28 variables that were responsible for communal conflicts in the study area. These eight underlying factors explained 51.59% of the variation in the data. That is to say that the factors that meet the cut-off criterion with Eigen-values greater than 1 are generally considered satisfactory. The extracted factors and their respective factor loadings exclude those whose absolute loading value was less than 0.40 according to Kaiser's rule of thumb (Farinde and Alabi, 2015). Those factors include: ethnic factors (1), cultural factors (2), Infrastructural factors (3), population pressure factors (4), social factors (5), Institutional factors (6), Resource control factors (7) and economic factors (8).

The first factor labelled ethnic factor has an Eigen-value of 4.24, loaded with six items and explained 13.24% variance of the inhibiting factors. Specific factors that revolve around ethnic factors with high factor loadings were: Intra-Tribal Sentiments (ITS) (0.782), Deliberate Hostilities by Majority Groups (DHMG) (0.737), Non-tolerance and Discrimination by host communities (NTD) (0.691), encroachment into farmlands (ENCROACH) (0.468), low compliance with stock routes (STOCK ROUTES) (0.437) and socio-economic factors (SEF) (0.422). The respondents have shown their concern for ethnic related factors as causes of communal conflicts in the study area. There is need for increased tolerance among the members of the communities and for them to create a harmonious environment of co-existence and equality for effective extension service delivery.

The second factor labelled cultural factors loaded with three items has an Eigen-value of 2.880 and 8.99% variance of the militating factors. Factors which loaded very high and revolve around cultural factors included: Lack of respect for customs (LRC) (0.765), fear of domination by the majority group (FD) (0.641) and disagreement over market ownership (DMO) (0.588). The items on this factor shows the farmers concern over disregard to the sanctity of the cultural aspects of their communities and the need for the various stakeholders within their communities to show respect to the various cultural entities in the communities for peace to reign so as to facilitate delivery of essential services

Key

ITS	-	Intra-Tribal Sentiments
DHMG	-	Deliberate Hostilities by Majority Group
NTD	-	Non-Tolerance and Discrimination by host Communities
ENCROACH	-	Encroachment in to farmlands
STOCK ROUTES	-	Low compliance with Stock routes
SEF	-	Socio-Economic Factors
LRC	-	Lack of Respect for Customs
FDMG	-	Fear of Domination by minority group
DMO	-	Disagreement over Market Ownership
DOCC	-	Destruction of Crops by Cattle
HOFH	-	Harassment of Farmers by Herdsmen
UALW	-	Unstable access to land and water
URBAN	-	Urbanization
POPP	-	Population Pressure



PFAC	-	Political Factors
SCL	-	Scarcity of Land
POV	-	Poverty
ILLT	-	Illiteracy
UDW	-	Unequal Distribution of Wealth
DITR	-	Declining Influence of Traditional Rulers
GOVA	-	Government Attitude
DSF	-	Depleting Soil Fertility
FF	-	Farm Fragmentation
REC	-	Resource Control
PEC	-	Poor Economic Condition
FAD	-	Frustration and Aggressive Displacement
AIHD	-	Alcoholism and Intake of Hard Drugs



Table 2. Factor analysis of rotated component matrix for causes of communal conflicts

Factors	Ethnic factors	Cultural factors	Infrastructural factors	Population pressure factors	Social factors	Institutional factors	Resource factors	Economic factors
ITS	0.782*							
DHMG	0.737*							
NTD	0.691*							
ENCROACH	0.468*							
STOCK ROUTES	0.437*							
SEF	0.422*							
LRC		0.765*						
FD		0.641*						
DMO		0.588*						
DOCC			0.794*					
HOFH			0.770*					
UALW			-0.660*					
URBAN				0.671*				
POPP				0.644*				
PFAC				0.535*				
SCL				0.452*				
POV					0.773*			
ILLT					0.726*			
UDW					0.526*			
DITR						0.719*		
GOVA						0.542*		
DSF							0.653*	
FF							0.637*	
REC							0.580*	
PEC								0.725*
FAD								0.654*
Chi2 (χ^2)	2779.10*							-0.504*
Eigen-value	4.235	2.880	2.038	1.829	1.502	1.481	1.318	1.201
% of variance:	13.24	8.99	6.40	5.71	4.70	4.63	4.12	3.80
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test: 0.716								
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (χ^2): 496.0*								

*Factors with significant loading Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Source: Field survey, 2017



The third factor labelled infrastructural factors has three factors which loaded very high with an Eigen-value of 2.038 and 6.40% variance of the inhibiting factors. The factors include: destruction of crops by cattle (DOCC) (0.794), harassment of farmers by herdsmen (HOFH) (0.770) and unstable access to land and water (UALW) (-0.660). This development calls for government to embark on effective land administration strategies to make land available for legitimate productive activities and as well provide the necessary infrastructure needed for the peaceful coexistence of community members.

The fourth factor labelled population pressure factors has four factors which loaded very high with an Eigen-value of 1.829 and 5.71% variance of the militating factors. These factors include: Urbanization (URBAN) (0.671), population pressure (POPP) (0.644), political factors (PFAC) (0.535) and scarcity of land (SCL) (0.452). The items on this factor show the concern of the respondents over the increasing demand for land as a result of population explosion, urbanization and political decisions. There is need for government to make the right political decisions and policies that will ensure proper management of land resources in the event of population explosion and the increasing competition for land resources to ensure that communal conflicts do not erupt in the process.

The fifth factor labelled social factors has three factors with an Eigen-value of 1.502 and 4.70% variance of the inhibiting factors. The factors revolving around social factors include: poverty (POV) (0.773), illiteracy (ILLT) (0.726) and unequal distribution of wealth (UDW) (0.526). This shows the concern of the respondents on the need for government to address the social problems that emanate from poverty, illiteracy and unequal distribution of wealth by bringing interventions that would create more jobs for the teeming youth population in the country ensuring equitable distribution of the nation's wealth.

The sixth factor labelled institutional factors has two factors with an Eigen-value of 1.481 and 4.63% variance of the militating factors. The group of factors that revolved around institutional factors include: declining influence of traditional rulers (DITR) (0.719) and government attitude (GOVA) (0.542). These factors showed the desire of the respondents for government to accord traditional authorities and leaders the recognition they deserve in playing important roles in community coherence and traditional justice systems resulting in harmonising the system.

The seventh factor labelled resource factors has three factors with an Eigen-value of 1.318 and 4.12% variance of the inhibiting factors. The factors classified under it include: depleting soil fertility (DSF) (0.653), farm fragmentation (FF) (0.637) and resource control (REC) (0.580). These factors indicate farmers' desire for Government to vigorously pursue policies that would reduce or eliminate communal land conflict. The cultural dimension of land should also be considered during conflict resolutions between communities and groups over parcels of land.

The eight and the last group of factors labelled as economic factors has three factors with an Eigen-value of 1.201 and 3.80% variance of the inhibiting factors. The classified factors include: poor economic condition (PEC) (0.725), frustration and aggressive displacement (FAD) (0.654) and alcoholism and intake of hard drugs (AIHD) (-0.504). This indicates farmers' worries over persisting poor economic condition coupled with alcoholism and intake of hard drugs and the need for the farmers to be assisted with productive resources like improved seeds, credits, technologies and other agro inputs by the government to reduce vulnerability and protracted conflict in communities.

The implication of this result is that the occurrence of communal conflicts in the study area is as a result of the interplay of certain factors like ethnic factors, cultural factors, situational factors, population pressure factors, social factors, institutional factors, resource



control factors, aggression factors and economic factors. This finding is consistent with the findings of Alimba (2014) that communal conflicts are triggered by economic, social, political, ecological and colonial factors.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that the underlying causes of communal conflicts in the study area were: ethnic factors, cultural factors, Infrastructural factors, population pressure factors, social factors, institutional factors, resource control factors and economic factors. The result revealed that farmers experienced social and economic losses in monetary terms in the areas of crop, livestock and other social assets. It was recommended that as a result of the frequent occurrence of communal conflicts within farming communities which disrupt delivery of essential services, government should make the right political decisions and policies that will ensure proper management of land resources in the event of population explosion and the increasing competition for land resources to ensure that communal conflicts does not erupt in the process.

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