THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TRADITIONAL METHODS IN MANAGING HERDER-FARMER CONFLICT IN SELECTED COMMUNITIES IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The failure of formal interventions to manage farmers-herdsmen conflict effectively necessitates the adoption of traditional methods of conflict resolution, such as mediation and adjudication. This study examines the effectiveness of traditional methods for managing herder–farmer conflict in selected communities in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study was anchored in the consensus theory. Multi-stage sampling techniques were used to select 703 respondents from selected communities in Kwara State, Nigeria. A mixed-methods approach was adopted. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics with SPSS version 23. Bar charts, frequency tables, simple percentages and means were used to present the findings. Qualitative data were analysed through textual analysis. The findings revealed that traditional approaches were widely accepted, but their effectiveness depends on the class/grade of the traditional leader in the communities. The study concluded that traditional methods are relatively

effective in management of farmers-herdsmen conflict. The study contributes theoretically to the consensus theory argument that adoption is natural and culturally embedded depending on the status of the traditional leader. It demonstrates that traditional methods of managing farmers-herdsmen conflict lie in the class/grade. The study recommends that traditional rulers be supported through capacity-building programmes by the government or NGOs with expertise in conflict management. This calls for more collaboration between traditional institutions and stakeholders to foster inclusive dialogue and more equitable resolution of disputes. The government, for its part, should enact by-laws to empower lower-ranking traditional rulers, thereby ensuring peace in conflict-ridden communities.

Introduction

Globally, land resources have often been an important source of economic assets and livelihoods, which closely linked to community history and socio-cultural identity. Conflict arising due to land resource conflicts are as a result of struggles over access, control and use of the land and natural resources therein. According to Onuoha (2020) these conflict often stemming from competing needs, unequal access, and the mismanagement of natural resources, leading to social and environmental issues. Across the world, nomads/nomadism have always been regarded as a by-product of the cultural evolution of sedentary farmers and as a permanent threat. They were considered primitive, backward, and incapable of improving their own living conditions and those of host communities (Yesil, 2023).This is because the nomads and their animals freely move from place to place, presumed to be using any available land and its valuable resources therein without any regard to the owner of the land or restrictions.

The Horn of Africa, Central and East Asia, and the Sahel region of North and West Africa, including countries like Ethiopia, Kenya, Chad, Nigeria, and Somalia, have the largest populations of pastoralist nomads in the world (Timpong-Jones et al., 2023). Therefore, agrarian communities in these countries have long experienced conflicts between herders and farmers, often resulting in the loss of life and property due to the shared need for land and water for their economic activities.Several studies have examined the dynamics of the farmers-herdsmen conflict. For example, Omokhoa and Okuchukwu (2018) examined "Land resource governance and farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria". The study revealed land resources, such as water, as one of the major causes of farmers-herders conflicts. The study recommends further research on conflicts between farmers and herders. Also, the work of Adeoye (2017), on "Land use conflict between farmers and herdsmen in parts of Kano, Yobe and Borno States of Nigeria: Nomads' viewpoints," shows that herdsmen's perception of land use for herding activities has largely contributed to the conflict. The study further recommends that traditional interventions, such as dialogue, should be adopted to de-escalate the conflict. Popoola et al.(2020) also studied the effect of farmer-herder conflict on entrepreneurial practice in south-western Nigeria.They found that water resources have significantly increased the persistence of the conflict between farmers and herders, as they are a major need for both parties. The study also recommends that all stakeholders in society,

such as traditional institutions, should seek to restore earlier cooperation between farmers and herders in the use of land resources.

However, the need and importance of adopting locally embedded solutions to manage farmers' and herders' conflicts have also gained research focus. Before the advent of foreign legal systems, African societies had suitable strategies, such as traditional institutions, family forum settlement, age grades, Ubuntu, and others, to address their interpersonal, intergroup, and communal misunderstandings.The work of Lawal et al. (2020), titled "Resolving conflict in African traditional society: An imperative of indigenous African system," asserts that conflict resolution by traditional leaders has existed since the pre-colonial era. The study revealed that different conflict cases are treated and managed at various levels of the traditional institution, with the king holding the highest authority over all matters. The study therefore recommends reviving traditional conflict-resolution methods rooted in the African value of collectiveness. Also, these methods vary and are applied in relation to the cultural dynamics of each society.For example, mediation is one of the core mechanisms used for conflict resolution. The study by Harriet et al. (2025) on factors influencing mediation effectiveness in conflict resolution states that mediation practices ingrained in culture are more successful in resolving community-based conflicts than purely formal mechanisms. The study therefore recommends that effective and sustainable capacity-building for mediators be through increased government and Non-governmental support for traditional institutions to enforce outcomes of the agreements. Similarly, Opongo's (2022) work on enhancing conflict resolution in Africa emphasises the effectiveness of mediation as a means of resolving conflicts.The study revealed that mediation is inclusive and focused on better living conditions of the parties involved in the conflict. It recommends the sustainability of the methods as primary tools of conflict resolution. Furthermore, the study by Ntuli (2018), "Africa: Alternative dispute resolution in a comparative perspective," shows that adjudication, as a conflict-resolution method involving a neutral third party, such as the traditional head, is often adopted to bring a conflict to an end. Therefore, the study recommends legal backing and an institutional frame for the traditional mechanism to enhance its viability.

From the above, it is clear that some studies exist, such as Omotola's (2023) on traditional institutions and the management of herder-farmer conflicts in Nasarawa state.The study recommends adopting methods from other states in Nigeria, given the cultural dynamics within the mechanism. Also, Yusufu's (2020) study on "Traditional institutions and the management of farmer-herder conflict in Kogi state, Nigeria, 2011-2019" stresses the need for further study on the effectiveness of these methods in other parts of the North-Central region, such as Kwara state. Malachi and Ajibade (2022) work on "Traditional leaders 'participation in peacebuilding and Nigerian farmers-herders post-conflict assessment" recommends further investigation on traditional institutions' method of managing farmers-herdsmen conflict. However, in Kwara state, several studies, such as Atolagbe (2024), focused on causes and consequences of farmer-herder conflict on food production in selected agricultural zones of Kwara state, Nigeria; Muritala et al.(2024) studied traditional conflict mechanisms and resolution of marital dispute: A study of Ibolo kingdom of Kwara state. Despite these laudable studies, there is a dearth of research on the effectiveness of traditional methods of managing farmers-herders conflicts in Kwara State.

Although peaceful co-existence and conflict are being functional in some Local Government Areas of Kwara State, limited or no attention has been paid to the failure and success of non-state actors' mechanisms, such as traditional institutions, that have played a prominent role in ensuring that both indigenes and settlers peacefully co-exist in their respective domains in other affected communities.Hence, this study examines the effectiveness of the traditional methods adopted to resolve farmers-herders conflicts in selected communities in Kwara State.

Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

i. To examine the traditional methods commonly adopted in managing herder-farmer conflict in selected communities in Kwara State, and

ii. To assess the effectiveness of the traditional methods adopted in managing herder-farmer conflict in selected communities in Kwara State.

Theoretical Framework

Wiredu's Moral Consensus Theory

The study adopts Wiredu's moral consensus theory to justify and assess the relevance of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in resolving Farmer-herder conflict in some parts of Kwara State. Kwesi Wiredu 1931–2022 propounded the moral consensus theory in 1992 (Dimgba, 2023). According to Azenabor (2018), moral consensus theory focuses on traditional reconciliation of conflicting parties in any given society to promote interpersonal relations and communalism, respect for constituted authority and elders, fellowship, hospitality and extended family systems. Azenabor (2018) cited a clear application of the theory in the case of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa in 1995, which resulted in revelations, confessions, and reparations rather than punishment.

In another perspective, Dimgba (2023) underscored Wiredu's theoretical concept as a conception of consensus on the two principles of sympathetic impartiality and the fundamental common interests of all humans.The two principles function as regulative principles of human actions and action. Also, Dimgba (2023) further submitted that Wiredu's ideas regard the village assembly as a place where divergent views and interests are reconciled and harmonised for the general good of the entire people. Despite Wiredu's invaluable contributions to modern African thought, Irikefe (2025) argued that Wiredu's work falls short as a feasible long-term epistemic project. He attributed these shortfalls to the hybridity of the post-colonial condition and to projects seeking to retrieve pre-colonial heritage, which are bound to be marred at several levels.

Regardless of the shortcomings of Wiredu's work, the theory's emphasis on upholding truth and reconciliation to promote interpersonal relations and communalism justifies the need for traditional conflict resolution to address farmer-herder conflicts, as in the case of this study.With the application of truth and reconciliation in resolving conflict, as postulated by Wiredu, disputants and the entire community will appreciate and embrace equity and justice in love, as applicable in South Africa. Finally, the aspect of Wiredu's work that accorded respect to constituted authority and elders justifies the need for third-party intervention, such as traditional and community leaders, using their preserved

knowledge and integrity to pacify their community members to embrace dialogue instead of violent conflict, most especially, the farmer-herder conflict that seems to become intractable.

Farmers-Herdsmen Conflict

"Farmer-herdsmen conflict" (also called farmer-pastoralist or farmer-grazier conflict) refers to disputes, often manifesting in violence, between settled crop farmers and nomadic or semi-nomadic livestock herders over land, water, grazing routes, and other natural resources. These conflicts typically involve crop damage (by livestock grazing or trampling), cattle rustling, encroachment into farmland, destruction of fences, and sometimes clashes over rights to migration routes or grazing corridors (Egbule & Okonta, 2024; Liu, 2022). According to Flintan et al. (2021) the tension from the farmers-herders conflict has been a consistent source of concern between the groups in Africa. One of the reasons cited for the above event was that the conflicts are mainly local, sporadic and low-intensity, with governments and national security forces not involved (Nassef et al., 2023). The African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security further added that the aftermath of the farmers-herders conflict has claimed more lives than terrorism (African Union, 2018). Also, Akinwotu (2021) reported that over 15,000 lives have been lost to the farmers-herdsmen conflict in the West and Central Africa sub-region. Likewise, in Nigeria, the conflict has intensified significantly since about 2015, especially in states in the Middle Belt and North-central, due to the increasing demand for land and water caused by land fragmentation, global climate change, and an inadequate land tenure system (Nassef et al., 2023). For example, Berry (2018) identifies "land control and resource disputes" as a major factor influenced by population growth and ambiguous land ownership systems. Karia (2022) likewise attributes the underlying factor of the conflict to environmental/resource scarcity and policy inadequacies. According to Gürsoy (2020), in Nigeria, easy access to arms and sophisticated communication devices has made the above conflicts between nomadic and pastoralist farmers more violent, claiming numerous lives and economic losses.

The farmers-herdsmen conflict has existed since time immemorial (Gürsoy, 2020). The conflict has transformed into a destructive, life-claiming one since the onset of the 21st century (Egbuta, 2018). This conflict also has some ethnic element involved (Gürsoy, 2020). The "Fulani" people are often recognised as pastoralist herders and settlers who live primarily in the north and have moved from one region to another throughout West Africa since the 15th century (Audu & Falola, 2024). The Fulani established an Islamic Caliphate in what is now northern Nigeria, which strengthened their political influence in the region (Audu & Falola, 2024). Over time, some groups migrated southward and intermingled with the indigenous Hausa population. Today, the Fulani are generally classified into two groups: the pastoral and nomadic Fulani, who are mostly found in the northern parts, and the urbanised Fulani, popularly called Hausa-Fulani, who are mostly found in the south (International Crisis Group, 2018). Both groups share the Fulfulde language and are Muslims, but the urban Fulani are perceived as more politically savvy and powerful than the nomadic Fulani (Audu & Linus, 2018; Maiangwa, 2017). There is also a religious dimension to the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria. Christianity and Islam have almost the same number of believers in Nigeria. Mostly, the people in the northern region are Muslims, and in the south are Christians. This

adds more complexity to the farmers-herders conflict because it is occurring mostly in the middle, between the north and the south. The middle region is a kind of transition zone among religions, flora, and between nomadic and sedentary lifestyles (Genyi, 2017). Hence, the multi-dynamic pattern of the conflict has continued to defer several mechanisms used to address it, without incorporating elements of traditional methods that have been effective in resolving conflicts in traditional African societies.

Methodology

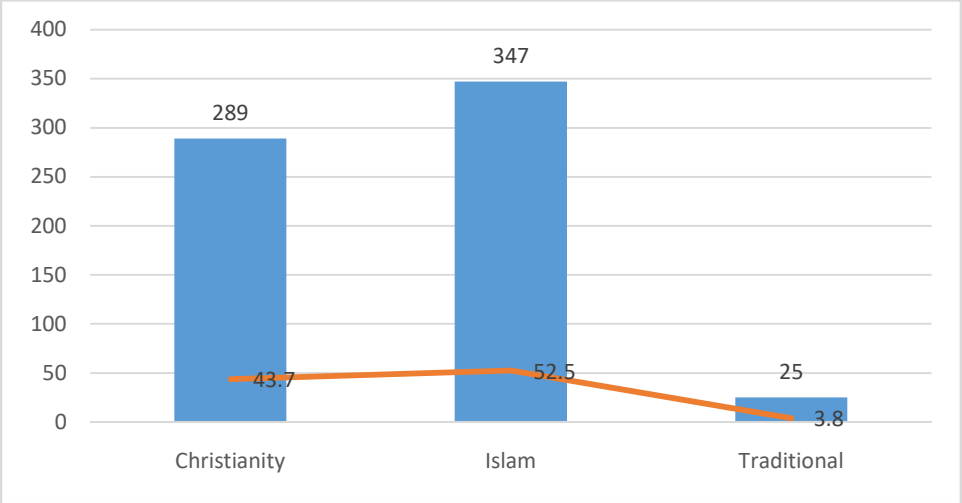
The study adopted a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative survey research with qualitative in-depth interviews. It followed a two-phase process: quantitative data were collected and analysed first, followed by qualitative data to explain and refine the initial findings, with integration occurring at the intermediate stage. For the quantitative component, the study population consisted of residents of *Lanwa* (2200), *Iponri* (3,100), *Oko-Ode* (2,500), *Kaima* (50,000), *Afon* (5000) and *Ira* (7,500).The choice of these communities was based on their involvement in farmer-herdsman conflict and their active engagement with traditional institutions to resolve it and enhance peaceful coexistence between the two groups. The estimated population is 70,300, based on the National Population Commission (2022) estimates. Respondents were selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. In the first stage, Cluster sampling techniques were used to delineate the study area in line with the three senatorial districts in Kwara State (Central, North, and South). Secondly, purposive sampling techniques were used in six conflict-affected communities where traditional peacebuilding methods had been applied.Proportionate random sampling at a rate of 1/100 was then used to select 703 respondents for questionnaire administration. For the qualitative component, 24 interview sessions were conducted, including a Key Informant Interview (KII) with one security agent and in-depth interviews with one traditional leader, herders, farmers, and Community Development Association members in each community. However, 661 completed questionnaires were analysed using simple percentages and mean. The average numerical value for the response was calculated relative to a benchmark of 3.0. To achieve this, the average numerical value of the respondents' opinions was calculated as (5+4+3+2+1)/5.The Respondents' opinions with a mean score of 3.0 were considered significant, while respondents' opinions with a mean score below 3.0 were not considered significant. Qualitative data were analysed through textual analysis to derive meaning, which was used to present the findings.

Results and Discussion

Respondents Socio-Demographic Status

Figure 1

Distribution of Respondents by Religion

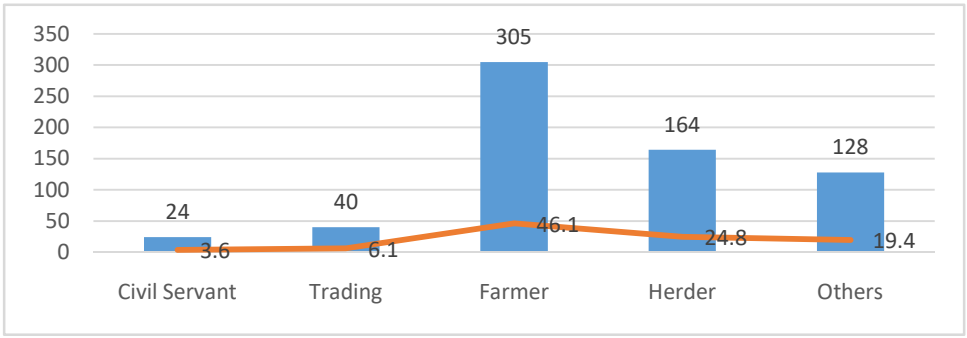


Source: Researcher's Field Study, 2025

The religious practice of respondents in the study, as shown in Figure 4.3, indicates that Christians were 289 (43.7%), those who practise Islam accounted for 347 (52.5%), and those who practise African traditional religion were 25 (3.8%).

Figure 2.

Distribution of Respondents by Occupation



Source: Researcher's Field Study, 2025

The table 24(3.6%) of the respondents are civil servants, 40(6.1%) are traders, 305(46.1) are farmers and 164(24.8%) are herders. Meanwhile, 128 (19.4%) are engaged in other economic activities, such as transportation and hunting. This shows that the majority of respondents were farmers engaged in crop farming, including cassava, yams, maize, and rice.

Research Question I: What are the traditional methods commonly adopted in managing herder-farmer conflict in selected communities in Kwara State?

Table 1: Ranking order of adjudication as traditional methods adopted in managing farmer-herdsmen conflict in Kwara State

Community	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	σ	Ranking
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)			
Lanwa	25 (34.7)	27 (37.5)	4 (4.6)	3 (5.6)	13 (18.1)	2.33	1.45	5th
Iponrin	41 (47.1)	30 (34.5)	5 (5.7)	5 (5.7)	4 (4.6)	1.92	1.20	6th
Oko-Ode	5 (11.4)	29 (65.9)	2 (4.5)	4 (9.1)	4 (9.1)	2.39	1.10	4th
Kaima	11 (6.9)	3 (1.9)	3 (1.9)	5 (3.1)	138 (86.3)	4.60	1.11	3rd
Afon	4 (2.6)	6 (3.9)	3 (2.0)	18 (11.8)	122 (79.7)	4.62	0.91	1st
Ira	7 (4.8)	3 (2.1)	3 (2.1)	13 (9.0)	119 (82.1)	4.61	0.99	2nd

Source: Researcher's Field Study, 2025

A detailed examination of the descriptive statistics in Table 1 reveals that the responses from the Lanwa, Iponrin, and Oko-Ode communities have mean scores below the benchmark of 3.0. In contrast, the Kaima, Afon, and Ira communities have mean scores above it. Based on the above, Adjudication was a traditional method adopted for managing farmer-herdsmen conflict in some communities in Kwara State, but not in others in the study area. The method needs to be widely adopted in managing conflict across all communities. A representative of a traditional leader has this to say;

When conflicts break out between farmers and herders, our traditional leaders have established mechanisms to resolve them. One of these mechanisms is a joint committee comprising Fulani and Yoruba representatives that addresses interethnic conflict. Another mechanism involves summoning the head of the Fulani community to meet with the chiefs at the palace (Interviewee, 2025).

In contrast to the above procedure in the Ira community, the community leaderhas a different approach in resolving farmer-herder conflict.

We do not have the authority to adjudicate conflicts between farmers and herders in this community. We can only appeal to the disputing parties to embrace peace. If the situation escalates, we invite security agencies such as the Police or the NSCDC to handle the matter (Interviewee, 2025).

The findings clearly show that the ability of traditional leaders to resolve conflicts depends largely on their status (grade) and personal authority within their domains, especially in matters related to farmer–herder conflicts. Towns such as Ira and Kaima are ruled by first- and second-class traditional rulers, whose elevated status confers greater legitimacy, broader jurisdictional control over land, and greater compliance from their subjects.This institutional authority enhances their capacity to mediate disputes, enforce customary sanctions, and broker compromises between farmers and herders.

Table 2: Ranking order of mediation as traditional methods adopted in managing farmer-herdsmen conflict in Kwara State

Community	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	σ	Ranking
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)			
Lanwa	2 (2.8)	5 (6.9)	2 (2.8)	6 (8.3)	57 (79.2)	4.54	1.03	4th
Iponri	5 (5.7)	4 (4.6)	2 (2.3)	7 (8.0)	69 (79.3)	4.50	1.13	5th
Oko-Ode	3 (6.8)	2 (4.5)	1 (2.3)	3 (6.8)	35 (79.5)	4.48	1.19	1st
Kaima	5 (3.1)	5 (3.1)	4 (2.5)	9 (5.6)	137 (85.6)	4.68	0.91	2nd
Afon	6 (3.9)	6 (3.9)	3 (2.0)	18 (11.8)	120 (78.4)	4.57	1.00	3rd
Ira	11 (7.6)	5 (3.4)	6 (4.1)	21 (14.5)	102 (70.3)	4.37	1.20	6th

Source: Researcher's Field Study, 2025

The descriptive analysis in Table 2 shows that responses across all communities have a mean of 3.0, which exceeds the benchmark. It highlights the strength of mediation as a traditional method for managing farmer-herdsmen conflict in Kwara State. The empirical results from the statistics are further strengthened with oral positions derived from the qualitative data. A farmer has this to say;

Sometimes, for the sake of peaceful coexistence, the Bale may intervene, but only with the agreement of the concerned parties. If the disputing farmer and herder choose to take the matter to the Bale for resolution, the Bale

will use wisdom and dialogue to ensure that both parties are satisfied with the outcome. This is due to both parties working together and seeing themselves as partners in progress for the community growth (Interviewee, 2025).

A herder lends credence, thus.

We usually prefer to go to the palace for settlement rather than to the police station or court. The Seriki, who is also the Emir, always ensures that both parties receive fair, moderate justice acceptable to everyone. Last month, when cattle destroyed our farm, he Emir asked both the farmer and the herder what we wanted from the resolution. Then the Emir took my advice and appealed to both parties to accept the settlement (Interviewee, 2025)

Unlike formal adjudication processes, the quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed that mediation is widely accepted and preferred as a mechanism for resolving farmer–herder conflicts in the study locations. Mediation, as commonly understood, involves the voluntary willingness of the disputing parties to accept the intervention of a neutral third party to achieve a mutually beneficial (win–win) resolution.

Research Question II: How effective are the traditional methods adopted in managing herder-farmer conflict in selected communities in Kwara State?

Table 3: Ranking order of restoration of peace as the effect of the traditional methods adopted in managing farmer-herdsmen conflict in Kwara State

Community	Very Ineffective	Ineffective	Don't Know	Fairly Effective	Very Effective	Mean	σ	Ranking
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)			
Lanwa	49 (68.1)	19 (26.4)	2 (2.8)	1 (1.4)	1 (1.4)	1.42	0.75	6th
Iponri	42 (48.3)	33 (37.9)	2 (2.3)	5 (5.7)	5 (5.7)	1.83	1.11	5th
Oko-Ode	4 (9.1)	36 (81.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (9.1)	2.18	0.95	4th
Kaima	6 (3.8)	8 (5.0)	7 (4.4)	41 (25.6)	98 (61.3)	4.36	1.04	1st
Afon	5 (3.3)	15 (9.8)	8 (5.2)	62 (40.5)	63 (41.2)	4.07	1.07	3rd
Ira	7 (4.8)	6 (4.1)	5 (3.4)	47 (32.4)	80 (55.2)	4.29	1.05	2nd

Source: Researcher's Field Study, 2025

A detailed examination of the descriptive analysis in Table 3 shows that the responses from the Lanwa, Iponri, and Oko-Ode communities have mean scores below the benchmark of 3.0. This implies that the traditional methods adopted were ineffective in restoring peace and order and in managing farmer-herdsmen conflict in those communities.

Meanwhile, the responses from Kaima, Afon, and Ira have mean scores above the 3.0 benchmark. The results showed that the traditional methods adopted were effective in restoring peace and order and in managing farmer-herdsmen conflict in these communities. The results from Table 3 were corroborated by the data gathered from the interview session. A farmer explained thus;

Whenever we have a problem with farmers and gather at the Alangua's palace, there is always peace and a solution. This is because we hold the chief in high esteem, and with his assistance, we enjoy relative peace with the crop farmers we often come into contact with along the grazing routes (Interviewee, 2025).

In the Ira community, another farmer testified to the peaceful coexistence they are enjoying due to the pragmatic conflict-resolution mechanism employed by the town's paramount ruler.

Even though we may not be fully satisfied with the resolution of the conflict, we trust and respect our chief, which helps to maintain peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders. Even though, this peace has still been threatened by bad-mannered herders, which has led to a re-escalation of the conflict (Interviewee, 2025).

Based on the above findings, relying primarily on traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution has contributed to temporary peace between farmers and herders in many towns and communities in Kwara State, where first- and second-class traditional rulers possess established authority and legitimacy.

Table 4: Ranking order on the effect of traditional methods in preserving the agro-economy from farmer-herder conflict in selected communities in Kwara State

Community	Very Ineffective	Ineffective	Don't Know	Fairly Effective	Very Effective	Mean	σ	Ranking
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)			
Lanwa	15 (20.8)	42 (58.3)	2 (2.8)	10 (13.9)	3 (4.2)	2.22	1.06	6th
Iponri	5 (5.7)	64 (73.6)	2 (2.3)	16 (18.4)	0 (0.0)	2.33	0.84	5th
Oko-Ode	0 (0.0)	31 (70.5)	0 (0.0)	11 (25.0)	2 (4.5)	2.64	1.01	4th
Kaima	14 (8.8)	8 (5.0)	6 (3.8)	25 (15.6)	107 (66.9)	4.27	1.28	2nd
Afon	6 (3.9)	11 (7.2)	5 (3.3)	29 (19.0)	102 (66.7)	4.37	1.10	1st
Ira	11 (7.6)	8 (5.5)	9 (6.2)	25 (17.2)	92 (63.4)	4.23	1.25	3rd

Source: Researcher's Field Study, 2025

An in-depth analysis of the descriptive statistics in Table 4 shows that responses from the Lanwa, Iponri, and Oko-Ode communities have mean scores below the benchmark of 3.0. This ascertains that the traditional methods adopted were ineffective in managing the farmer-herdsmen conflict in Kwara State. Meanwhile, the responses from Kaima, Afon and Ira have a mean score above the benchmark of 3.0, indicating that the traditional methods adopted were effective in managing the farmer-herdsmen conflict in these communities. In line with the statistical data, interview reports also supported the results.

Whenever cattle destroy my crops, I take the owner of the cattle to the Oba's palace for possible action. This has always been the way we settle such misunderstandings because our traditional ruler has warned us to report such unwarranted activities to him for the sake of peaceful coexistence. After hearing the case, the ruler asks me to state my demand. Once I do, the cattle owner usually pleads that he cannot afford the amount. The ruler then intervenes and asks me to reduce my demand to an amount the offender can afford, and I have no option but to comply. However, considering the actual losses suffered, the compensation is never worth it (Interviewee, 2025).

A farmer shared a similar experience.

There was never a time when the herders were summoned by the Bale and obeyed his orders. Where, then, can losses be recovered through a process that the disputing parties do not respect? Even the little compensation we receive comes through the security operatives, and it is never equal to the losses suffered (Interviewee, 2025).

The above finding revealed the extent to which the traditional method of conflict resolution has been preserved and helped in recovering from agro-economic losses caused by farmer-herder conflict. As widely inferred from statistical and oral evidence, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are ineffective in this regard in some communities.

Findings

The study examines "the effectiveness of the traditional methods in managing herder-farmer conflict in selected communities in Kwara state". Findings from the study revealed that:

i. Some communities adopted adjudication as a traditional method of conflict resolution between farmers and herdsmen, while others were unable to do so because of the traditional leader's class or category. Also, mediation, a traditional method of conflict resolution between farmers and herdsmen, was adopted across all communities.

ii. The traditional method of conflict resolution between farmers and herdsmen was effective in communities with first- and second-class traditional leaders, but ineffective in communities with third- and lower-grade traditional leaders.

Discussion of Findings

The study's findings with regard to the first research question revealed that traditional methods of conflict resolution differ from one community to another. These findings are consistent with Liu (2022) who states that traditional rulers of higher rank are respected

across ethnic and occupational groups and therefore their decisions are more acceptable and less likely to escalate into conflict. In line with these scholars' submissions, it is safe to submit that the first/second traditional rulers in Kwara State still possessed the authority to intervene and adjudicate farmer-herder conflict. By contrast, communities governed by lower-ranking chiefs, such as Bales or fourth-class traditional rulers, tend to have weaker adjudicatory power. Their limited authority constrains their ability to impose binding resolutions, especially in highly sensitive disputes involving land use and grazing rights. Consequently, such leaders frequently resort to transferring cases of farmer–herder conflict to formal security agencies in Kwara State. Also, Mediation is an extensively accepted and preferred mechanism used for resolving farmer–herder conflicts in the study locations. Mediation, as commonly understood, involves the voluntary willingness of the disputing parties to accept the intervention of a neutral third party to achieve a mutually beneficial (win–win) resolution. The results are in line with Garcia's (2019) claim that the process is not about punishment or coercion but about dialogue, compromise, and relationship repair.

As such, mediation is considered more appropriate for maintaining peaceful co-existence than adversarial methods such as litigation or formal adjudication. As such, mediation is considered more appropriate for maintaining peaceful co-existence than adversarial methods such as litigation or formal adjudication. Similarly, the findings by Okoh et al.'s (2025) support the argument that mediation by traditional institutions has been effective in managing farmer–herder conflicts in Nigeria through promoting dialogue, restitution and reconciliation rather than confrontation. Hence, the adoption of mediation by traditional leaders in Kwara State reveals the trust and acceptability by members of the communities and its significance in sustaining peace and social solidarity among farmers and herdsmen due to interdependent livelihoods. Also, in relation to research question two, the traditional methods of conflict resolution adopted are based on dialogue, compromise and relationship repair rather than punishment or coercion (Smidt, 2020). This is the case in Kwara communities where the mechanism is widely adopted by traditional rulers and is based on the communal nature of rural livelihoods whereby farmers and herders depend on shared spaces and are compelled to maintain long-term social and economic relationships.This is consistent with the consensus theory that the methods of the traditional institutions are collectively accepted by members of the community through their participation in peace efforts, effective social support, and community trust that constitute strong mechanisms for intervening in conflicts. It is similar to Abalaka's (2025) assertion that traditional mediation mechanisms in agrarian conflicts tend to favour reconciliation over restitution, thereby perpetuating economic vulnerabilities for farming households. Although the finding seemed to favour a peaceful resolution of the conflict, the economic loss of the farmer remains unresolved. This study, therefore, raises concerns about the capacity of local traditional rulers to sustain long-term peace in their respective domains. Consequently, the short-term peace achieved through traditional mechanisms does not always address deeper drivers of conflict, such as competition over land.

Conclusion

The study examines the effectiveness of traditional methods for managing herder-farmer conflict in selected communities in Kwara State.

The study found that the traditional methods of conflict resolution adopted in selected communities to manage conflicts between farmers and herdsmen were adjudication and mediation.However, the study found that the effectiveness of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in managing farmer–herder conflicts in Kwara State is largely determined by the status, legitimacy, and authority of traditional rulers. The study extends understanding of traditional methods of managing farmers' and herdsmen's conflict by applying consensus theory to the collective acceptability of adjudication and mediation as the most commonly available and culturally accepted mechanisms for managing such conflict, because they promote dialogue, compromise, and communal coexistence. However, extensive studies have been done on traditional methods and the farmers-herdsmen conflict. Few studies have examined the effectiveness of the methods with respect to the status of the traditional head.This study fills the gap by investigating the effectiveness of traditional methods across communities, with respect to the traditional leader's level of authority. The study, therefore, revealed a new concern about factors that influence the effectiveness of traditional methods in conflict resolution. The study contributed theoretically by advancing the consensus theory argument regarding the adoption of traditional methods in conflict resolution, positing that adoption depends on the status of the traditional leader, in contrast to previous studies that suggest consensus is natural and culturally embedded. This study revealed that the effectiveness of traditional methods in conflict resolution is influenced by factors such as the level of traditional authority, thereby advancing consensus theory. Hence, traditional methods of managing farmers and herdsmen conflicts are relatively effective and enhance social stability.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the study recommends that traditional rulers be supported through capacity-building programmes that enhance their skills in mediation, adjudication, and conflict management, delivered by the government or NGOs with expertise in such training. Furthermore, collaboration between traditional institutions and relevant stakeholders, such as farmers' associations, herders' groups and local government officials should be encouraged to promote inclusive dialogue and more equitable resolutions of conflicts. The government should also enact bylaws that strengthen the power of lower-ranking traditional rulers, especially in smaller communities where traditional mechanisms are less effective. Future researchers should investigate the use of traditional methods of conflict resolution to adequately compensate victims of farmer-herdsman conflicts.

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