

Social Inclusivity and Trust-Building as Prospective Factors in Managing Farmers-Herders Conflicts in Southwest, Nigeria

Original Research Article | Volume 1 | Issue 5 | 2026 | Article Number: 047

Accepted: 25 September 2026 | Published: 10 October 2026 | ISSN: 2979-8582 (Online)



Crossref : <https://doi.org/10.67693/BJCR-CI7P3DIX>



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Abstract

The study examined “social inclusivity and trust-building as prospective factors in managing farmers-herders’ conflict in southwest, Nigeria”. This became imperative due to the incessant crisis between the farmers and the herders that have brought about loss of lives, destruction of properties, loss of cows and destruction of farmlands, among others, where previous conflict management strategies have failed to yield any positive result in combating the crisis. The study specifically examined the prospect of social inclusivity on reconciliation in managing farmers/herders’ conflicts and analyze the prospect of trust-building on negotiation towards managing the conflict between the farmers and herders. The study adopted field survey research design for a total population of twenty-four thousand and eight hundred (24,800). Taro Yemane formular was employed to determine the sample size of 300 respondents. Out of the 300 copies of questionnaire administered, 254 were retrieved. The result of the data analyzes revealed that that the correlation co-efficient of the social inclusivity and trust building showed positive co-efficient values of 0.911 and 0.868 respectively and the hypothesis I showed F-test value 1225.2, with p-values of 0.000, hypothesis II showed F-test value 767.3, p-values 0.000, hypothesis. The implication of this is that there is a significant positive relationship between the dependent (reconciliation and negotiation) and the independent (social inclusivity and trust-building) variables in managing the conflicts between the herders and farmers in southwest Nigeria. The study concluded that social inclusivity and trust-building have positive and significant prospect in putting an end to the conflicts between the farmers and the herders in southwest, Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommended, among others; that community leaders, government agencies, and relevant stakeholders should institutionalize inclusive reconciliation frameworks that actively involve both farmers and herders in decision-making processes. Also, openness and honesty with the people during negotiation will reduce conflicts, and display of trust and sincerity by the parties towards search for common ground during negotiation will end conflicts.

Keywords: Social Inclusivity, Trust-Building, Negotiation, Reconciliation

INTRODUCTION

A critical problem combating world peace today is the manifestation of conflicts in different forms across the globe. This ranges from Europe to America, Africa to Asia, conflicts are common phenomena (Marshall & Gurr, 2015 in Jeong, 2018). Conflicts, in the words of Patzak, (2012) is defined as an antagonistic state of opposition, disagreement or incompatibility between two parties. Also, Hussein and Al-Mamary (2019) defined conflict as a process that started where one party perceives that another party has negatively affected or is about to negatively affect what the first party dearly cares about. Therefore, the definition emphasizes that conflict is about perceptions and not entirely real hard facts. It is obvious that the various definitions given above captured the present situation between the herders and the farmers in Nigeria. Farmer-herder conflicts have existed since early days of agriculture in Africa (Fratkin, 2018), and its continued evolving violent nature as a result of social differences, resource scarcity, increase in the population of resource users, lack of adequate grazing reserves coupled with poor state of the existing ones. The presence of conflicts have been witnessed in several states in the country, but what is completely new is the situation of things, turning sore between the farmers and herders in the southwestern states of Nigeria.

In recent years, conflicts have occurred between the farmers and the herders in south western part of the country, and these have coursed adverse effects on the socio and economic development of some communities in the area, with several undesirable incidences such as, arson, wanton killings, destruction of lives and properties, destruction of farmlands, murder, kidnapping etc. (Babalola, S. F, Alaba, D. O. Isaac, U. I and Asuquo, S. O., 2024). Between 2005 and 2021, about 1300 people have been displaced in ondo state and several deaths also recorded (Ogunbode, Ayodele, Oyebamiji and Faboro, 2023). In Oyo state, between 2015 and 2018, 14 people were reportedly killed and 414 people displaced (Kukah Centre report, 2018), while in Ekiti state, between 2015 and 2018 5 persons were reportedly killed in several communities in Ikole Local Government Areas and several others displaced (Kukah Centre report, 2018). As a result of the conflicts, the peaceful coexistence being enjoyed over the years between the host communities and the Fulani herders in the south western part of the country has gradually deteriorated (Babalola et al, 2024).

The increasing conflicts between the farmers and the herders is premised on several factors which is regarded as aged-long, such as, encroachment of castle routes of the herders, inadequate grazing reserves to feed the cows, lack of access to water points, pollution of water points etc. others are lack of access to gracing reserves as a result of human settlements, large-scale agricultural land use, and the establishments of several industries. Unfortunately, there have been several ways by which the government and the stakeholders have tried to manage the conflicts without success. Conflicts management strategies like dialogue, mediation, reconciliation, collaboration, negotiation etc have been employed without success. Despite the deployment of all these strategies and many others, the conflicts between the farmers and the headers have remained insurmountable. Therefore, there is a need for the introduction of alternative conflict management strategies in social inclusivity and trust-building. Although, reconciliation which is the way of restoring a friendly relation after an argument or conflicts, and negotiation which is a way to create a sense of honesty, safety, sincerity and confidence, are still very essential in managing conflicts.

Social inclusivity emphasizes the importance of inclusive participation of all relevant parties involved in the conflicts in ensuring that the voices of the marginalized are heard (UNHCR, 2021) as stated in “Strengthening inclusion and Peaceful coexistence through community Cinema and Digital Media with

Refugee youth and Host Community in Ecuador”. It means that all people, regardless of their race, background, identity have equal access to every opportunity, resources and with equal voice in the community. While trust-building is another vital aspect of conflict management strategies, and the initiative provides avenue for a safe and neutral space for participants to interact, fostering relationship based on trust, empathy, honesty and shared experience, as noted in Omolekan and Gunu (2022) which examined “Trust Building and Consensus Approach to Conflict Resolution”. Reconciliation and negotiation are key aspects of conflict management strategies which borders on reconciling the conflicting groups, based on trust from both parties that the reconciliation process would be fair, transparent, and with utmost sincerity.

It is against this background that this study looks at social inclusivity and trust-building as prospective factors in managing the conflicts between the farmers and headers in southwest Nigeria. The study specifically examined the prospect of social inclusivity on reconciliation in managing farmers-herders’ conflicts in the study area; and to analyze the prospect of trust-building on negotiation in managing farmers-herders’ conflicts in southwest Nigeria.

Hypotheses (Null)

Ho₁: There is no significant prospect in social inclusivity on reconciliation in managing farmers-herders’ conflicts in Southwest, Nigeria

Ho₂: There is no significant prospect in trust-building on negotiation in managing farmers-herders’ conflicts in Southwest, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria is a long standing, escalating crisis driven by competition over shirking land and water resources, climate change, rapid population growth, collapse of grazing reserves since the 70's and weak institutions (Chukuemeka and Nuhu, 2025). It has its roots deeply embedded in history, dating back to several centuries. In the pre-colonial era, Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups practiced different livelihoods, with farmers engaging in settled agriculture and herders leading nomadic lives, moving their livestock across vast territories in search of grazing lands and water sources (Ojo, 2016). During this period, interactions between farmers and herders were generally peaceful, where the traditional rulers and local institutions regulated the grazing routes, water access and conflict resolutions as they recognized the mutually beneficial relationship between agriculture and pastoralism (Monod 2013).

However, the coming of European colonial powers into Nigeria in the late 19th and early 20th centuries brought significant changes to this relationship. Under the British Colonial masters, the government introduced grazing reserves and cattle routes to reduce clashes where the Northern part of Nigeria became a center for cattle rearing. However, land demarcations and ownership restricted herders' traditional grazing routes, leading to resource competition and tensions with farmers. Even after Nigeria gained independence in 1960, the legacy of the colonial policies persisted, worsening the conflict (Shettima and Tar, 2018). In recent years, the farmers/herders’ conflicts have become a disaster for Nigeria, in fact, the nature of the attacks have changed overtime, and it is often contained in the news that the fulani herders now allegedly use firearms (Anichie and Ugwu, 2019). The causes of these conflicts can be traceable to ethnic and religious dimensions. In southwest Nigeria, farmers and herders conflicts caused by several factors such as resource scarcity, climate change, and land expansion, have become so violent and frequent, as it has never been in the past, specifically affecting states like Ondo, Oyo and Ekiti states. The crises, rooted in farm destruction, competition for water, lack of adequate grazing routes, have resulted in significant losses of lives, properties, and economic livelihoods (Shiyanmade, Igbokwe and Taiwo, 2025)

In Ondo state, the former governor of the state, Dr. Olusegun Mimiko, declared an emergency on the situation between the farmers and the herders as he suggested that the continual attacks on farmers by Fulani herdsmen in the South-West and some other parts of the country must be critically looked into. Mimiko was of the opinion that if the attacks by the herdsmen were not curtailed urgently, the development might lead the country to serious conflicts between the Fulanis and their host communities. The governor in his words, called on the President Muhammadu Buhari (deceased) and other stakeholders to be more proactive about the attacks in order to stop them from degenerating to a serious crisis in the country (Vanguard, 2017). The Fulani herdsmen were also reported to have invaded the farm of a former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Chief Olu Falae and killed a guard, identified as Ayodele Ige, who was one of the leaders of the Odua People's Congress (OPC) in the State. Earlier in September, 2015, the herders had invaded the farm, where they kidnapped Falae, and he was released three days after a ransom was paid. The kidnap and subsequent rescue of Chief Olu Falae brought to the fore the need to debate what should be the approach of the government towards the activities of Fulani herdsmen in the country. There were also reports of women and girls being raped, sometimes in front of their husbands and parents by the herdsmen, not to talk of wan-ton destruction of lives and properties in the wake of increasing and unprovoked atrocities by cattle herdsmen (Ochoche, 2017).

Conflicts between the Fulani herdsmen and the farming communities normally arise when the herders invade community farmlands with their cattle and allow them feed without restriction both on cultivated and uncultivated land as a result of this destroying valuable food and cash crops, which are the main-stay of the host communities (Ewoh, Kieh and Olumilua, 2025). Reportedly, when the communities attempt to resist the herders and their animals by insisting on their exit, the Fulani herdsmen would become violent and attack the community members (Brennan, 2011).

The herders who usually move around with sophisticated weapons, including AK 47 rifles, herders have often reportedly attacked their target and vulnerable communities, killing, destroying and looting with impunity (Ewoh, Kieh and Olumilua, 2025). Communities in North Central states of Plateau, Nasarawa, Taraba and Benue have paid heavy tolls in human lives and properties. More and more, conflict has been reported in the South Eastern part of the country and South West also, as the herders extend their search for grazing fields southwards during the dry season when the Northern part of the country completely dry off, both in vegetation and water. As they advance, so does their mayhem and destruction. Most disturbing is the brutality and impunity with which the herdsmen reportedly operate, with no regard for the law and the sanctity of life. Even to the outright reluctance of Nigeria's security agencies to defend the victims who are brutally killed in their homes, and a clearer picture of the seriousness of the situation would emerge (Al-Marshat cited in Ayogu, 2015)

In Oyo state, (Adeleke, 2018) explained that farmers in Logun, Iyana Offa, Atagba and Lapata and their environment in Lagelu Local Government area of Oyo state, Nigeria also reported that they were attacked by group of suspected herders who also stole valuables from them. Areas like Saki, Ago-Amodu, Ago-Are, Oye-Owode and igangan have also been attacked several times by the herders. In each of these attacks, lives were lost, properties destroyed, farmlands destroyed and several villagers were displaced as a result of the conflicts. Also, in Ekiti state, an alleged killings of farmers in Oke-Ako area, Ikole Local Government of Ekiti State on the 20th of May, 2016 provoked the then governor of the state, Ayodele Fayose to declare war against the herders in 2018. This situation brought about the state government promulgating the Ekiti state anti grazing law tagged 'The prohibition of cattle and other Ruminants Grazing in Ekiti State' (Buhari & Edihagbonya, 2023). In Osun state, farmers/herders conflicts have also been witnessed severally in crop farming communities in Osogbo, Ife-ijesa and Iwo. (Alao, Ibitunde and Isola, 2024). They attacked most of the farmers who had little power to protect themselves and most of the

time the attack caught the farmers and the rural dwellers unaware. They overpowered the farmers, injured them and the herders take undue advantage of them by stealing their agricultural produce, rape them, kidnap and raze their houses (Alao et al, 2024).

Several approaches on conflict management have been used over the years, according to Ukata and Silas-Dikibo, 2020 that the principle of conflict management is that not all conflicts can be resolved, but learning how to manage conflicts can decrease the odds of non-productive escalation. Conflict management is ‘the process of reducing the negative and destructive capacities of conflict through a number of measures and by working with and through the parties involved in that conflict (Ukata and Silas-Dikibo, 2020). This term is used interchangeably as synonymous with “conflict regulation”. This also involves conflict handling at various levels including those efforts to prevent conflict by being proactive. However, to some conflict analysts, the term conflict management accorded a narrower definition than it deserved. Azem, (2015) posits that the literal meaning of management in social and management sciences discipline is more broader than its ordinary definition in peace and conflict studies. Managing conflict entails a process that involves conflict handling at all ramifications and at all stages for purposes of bringing the situation under control. In this case, conflict management covers all decisions and actions taken by parties, individuals, or groups to handle conflict. However this definition should be transcended to other disciplines to include how conflicts are initiated, how it escalates, how it is controlled, its final resolution among other things. Supporting this assertion Ajayi and Abdulraheem, (2022) defines conflicts as a battle for ideas and claims to scarce status, and power, and resources when the opponents’ goals are to neutralize or destroy their adversaries. He looked at it as also involving long-term institutionalization of rules and regulation for purposes of controlling and dealing with conflict at a formal level.

Black, (2015) defines conflict management as the “handling of grievance”. He suggested five types of conflict management and the social condition under which each of these is likely to occur. These principles are self-help, avoidance, negotiation, settlement and toleration. Some of these strategies are more likely to be used more often than not than others as forms of “social control from above”, by individuals and groups of higher status against those of lower; “social control from below” by those of lower status against those of higher; and social control between those of relative equal status. The term conflict management seems to be the general term for conflict prevention, containment, resolution, and conflict transformation. It was as a result of this that the study uses the term management to represent among other things the diverse concepts in conflict management studies. Hence, management was also used in this study to identify how farmer-herders conflicts are managed and resolved in the study area

The passion and interest in the study of conflict management has unleashed a new paradigm shift in research interest after the cold war period due to persistent increase in conflicts in some parts of Nigeria. The manifestation of low intensity conflicts [LIC] such as ethnic, religious, political and resource upsurge attracted much interest among researchers. Azem, (2015) observed that, the passion that propelled the enthusiasm for building theories in the field of conflict studies in recent years. In virtually all African communities, there exists preference for peaceful and non-violent means of managing and resolving conflicts without destroying the sanctity of the societal norms and values. In fact, in most African traditional societies, traditional ways of conflict management and resolution precedes colonialism. Prior to the scramble and partition of Africa, traditional institutions were the sanctioning authorities. In recent times, modernization has evolved several methods of peaceful and non-violent management and resolution of community conflicts.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The study employed psycho-cultural conflict theory which was propounded by Marc Howard Rose, a political psychologist, in the year 1995. Rose argued that conflicts arising from identity are particularly dangerous because they are rooted in the group's worldviews and deeply held sense of worth, making them violent and difficult to resolve. There is no gain saying that another driver of conflicts at a particular point is the identity elements within a certain culture which differentiate them from the other culture, and which are seriously maintained to the later, even in the presence of provocation. This is common in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria, culturally induced conflicts are widespread and common. This practically explains the battling and the deep-seated conflicts of identity that have bedeviled the country in the 20th and 21st centuries. Psycho-cultural conflict theorists generally believed that when some group of individuals or persons are denied certain basic needs because of their race or identity, it might culminate into violent conflict. Therefore, the psychocultural theory, which Rose also called "Psychocultural Drama" which implies competing towards taking possession of some resources, is related to the conflict between the farmers and the herders which hinged upon competing for land, either for farming or for grazing. While the Fulani herders believe that by the virtue of its cultural heritage which gives them the opportunity to move around the country unhindered can take the possession of every land where they find themselves, but the farmers, who have on the other hand, seen themselves as the owner of the lands, having been handed over to them by their forefathers for farming, will never allow a group of individuals to take over their ancestral land.

Empirical Review

Kayode (2020) examined the coping strategies of crop farmers to pastoralist activities in Odo-Otin Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. A multistage sampling technique was used to select 120 farmers. The data were collected using a well-structured questionnaire and interview and were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The result revealed various levels of damage caused to food security by the pastoralist as follows: compaction of soil(84%), damage and eating of the crops on thefield(79%), indiscriminate bush burning leading tofire outbreak on farms (73%), stealing of farm produce by herders (73%), pollution of water points (54%), killing of farmers (13%)and others.

Emmanuel (2020) carried out a study on Resolving the Farmers Herders Conflict in Nigeria: A Way Forward for Sustainable National Development. The data was analyzed using regression analyses. The results of Chi-square analysis showed that there is a significant relationship between the educational status ($X^2 = 13.06$, $P = 0.01$) and coping strategies used against pastoralist activities.

Dimelu and Salifu (2021) examined the Challenges of herdsmen-farmers' conflict in livestock production in Nigeria: Experience of pastoralists in Kogi State, Nigeria. Data were collected by use of structured interview schedule, focus group discussion and personal observation and analysed using descriptive statistics and factor analysis. The majority (95.8%) of pastoralists were male, married (80%) with mean age of 39 years and average household size of 11 persons. Herding was mainly for prestige and commercial purposes with an average farm size of 240 cattle. Conflicts between pastoralists and crop farmers were caused by socio-economic, security, production practices and institution related factors. Consequently, pastoralists had the problems of insecurity of human and animal lives, displacement and economic losses leading to poor productivity.

Bamidele (2021) carried out a study on applying restorative justice in resolving the farmers-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria. The finding shows that the application of restorative justice as part of conflict resolution mechanisms will more sustainably resolve the farmers-herders conflict in the country, as well as enhance national security and development.

Abdu (2021) carried out a study on the causes and resolution of conflict between cattle herders and crop farmers in Katsina state with the objective of investigating the causes of farmer-herder conflict and the performance of management institutions towards the resolution of the conflict in the State. Three (3) local government areas were purposively selected from the 3 senatorial zones. This was followed by the selection of 21 crop farmers and 21 cattle herders from each of the 3 local government areas through snowball sampling to obtain a sample size of 126 respondents. Data were gathered with the aid of structured interview schedules; however. Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency counts, percentages) were used to describe the personal characteristics of crop farmers and cattle herders, identify the types of conflict resolution mechanisms employed by these institutions and determine the causes of the conflict as well as examine the institutions involved in the management and resolution of the conflict and logistic regression analysis was used to examine the factors responsible for the cause of conflict in the study area. Results from the findings indicate that 75% of the cattle herders had no formal education implying that formal education level is very low. Crop damage by cattle (3.165, $P < 0.01$), encroachment of cattle routes (2.175, $P < 0.01$), inadequate grazing reserves (3.444, $P < 0.01$), lack of access to water points (2.737, $P < 0.05$), pollution of water points (3.022, $P < 0.05$), indiscriminate bush burning (1.512, $P < 0.05$), cattle rustling (1.485, $P < 0.05$), land tenure system (1.621, $P < 0.05$), and changes in climate conditions (1.507, $P < 0.05$), were the causes of the conflict.

Christopher (2020) carried out a study on Promoting Peace Amid Group Conflict: An Intergroup Contact Field Experiment in Nigeria. The study tests the ability of a contact-based intervention to promote peace between conflicting groups with a field experiment in Nigeria, where farmer and pastoralist communities are embroiled in a deadly conflict over land use. The study evaluates the program with surveys, direct observation of behavior, and a behavioral game. These results suggest that reducing barriers to peace between conflicting groups is possible, and that structured intergroup contact is a promising method to do so.

Ewelu, Dimolu and Asadu (2015) examined Farmer-Cattle herder Conflict: Mitigating and Mediating Strategies in Nigeria. The study made use of Web search, Journals, Newspapers, Magazines, books and reports. The study highlighted the strategies to mitigate and manage the conflicts as follows: creation of awareness on climate change, afforestation campaign, use of improved technology; setting up of peace building committee, establishment of open communication and prompt payment of compensations. The study recommended that there is need for involvement of all stakeholders and desirability of co-existing together of the parties in order to manage the conflicts.

Onah and Olajide (2018), examined "Applying restorative justice in resolving the farmers-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria". The study argues that the continuing occurrence of the crisis can be as a result of non-application of restorative justice procedures by the government when dealing with the conflicts. The study concludes that the application of restorative justice through adequate consultation with various stakeholders will more sustainably resolve farmers-herdsmen conflicts in the country, as well as enhance national security and development.

Muhammed et al, (2023) analyzed "State Responses to herders-farmers conflict and Peace building in rural grazing areas of Nigeria". The study aims at investigating the relationship between state responses and peace-building in rural grazing communities in Nigeria, using a National Survey on Peace building with a cross-sectional survey of 1, 711 farmers and herders. The results showed that protection of victims of herders-farmers conflicts, blockage sources of illicit weapons, arrest of leaders, provision of shelters, provision of food, protection of women from sexual exploitation and abuse were positively related to peace building in rural grazing areas. The study further found that when the Federal government, state government, private individual and cooperative societies established ranches, peace was likely to be

guaranteed as opposed to where herders were allowed in the rural grazing communities.

United State Agency for International Development (USAID, 2014). Spotlight, 'Peace Education in Colombia: A pedagogical strategy for durable peace'. The study was conducted in Colombia after many years of violence that there is a need to transform the way people relate to one another in Colombia. The study suggested peace education as a key empowerment programme where schools are not only seen as the only way where social change can be brought into a community, but also the need for broad participation of youth, community members, and political societal and cultural instructions, leadership and elites.

Muhammed (2024). 'Conflict Resolution and Peace Building in the International Arena'. The study examines conflict resolution and peace building in the international arena with reference to Indonesia, Aceh, and Rwanda. Based on the analysis, the research highlights the importance of community engagement, inclusivity, international support, and community based approaches in achieving sustainable peace. In Rwanda, availability of space for community dialogue and participation are one of the key factors supporting the successful resolution of the conflicts. The study believed that dialogue and empowerment increase a sense of ownership, which in turn can strengthen community commitment to maintaining stability and preventing the recurrence of conflicts.

Apipaalakul, Jaimoka and Tang (2017). The study examine the relationship between and effect of community participation and conflict management on gold mining resources in Khaochetluk sub-district Tapkhlo district, phichit province, Thailand. 224 respondents were used in the study. The study also used cross-sectional descriptive research design with well structured questionnaires to collect data from the respondents. The study employed Pearson product moment and stepwise multiple linear regression. Findings of the study showed that both variables; such as community participation as well as conflict management were at moderate level. Additionally, Pearson correlation coefficients revealed that community participation had significant, positive, and moderate relationship with conflict management ($r = 0.456$) at the significant level of 0.01. Consequently, result of this study revealed that there were two significant predictors toward conflict management. These two significant predictors were 'involvement' and 'empowerment' components of community involvement which have successfully contributed 20.1 percent variance of conflict management at 0.01 significant level. On the other hand, the findings indicated that an establishment of platform to provide opportunities for community participation and also suggested the appointment of committee that will see to the proper monitoring of the process. This study is able to promote the importance of community participation in conflict management.

Omolekan and Gunu (2022). Trust-building and Concensus Approach to Conflict Resolution: An alternative to strike action in Nigeria. The study adopted a survey design and samples of the study are some selected organized labour union leaders and key top executive officers. Cluster and simple sampling techniques were used to select sample respondents, with well structured questionnaires and interviews were used to gather data from the respondents. Ordinary least square regression, correlation and cross tabulation were used to analyzed the collected data. The study found out that honesty, loyalty and sacrifice are significant in conflict resolution and crisis management.

Apipalakul, et al (2015). Development of Community Participation on Water Resource Conflict Management. The study was an action research regarding community participation on water resource conflict management of the pong watershed province, Thailand. The study used 170 households samples coming from the three villages including Huai Jode, Nong Bua Noi, Non Kham Par located at Kud Namsi SubDistrict, Pong District, Khon Kaen Province. This study comprises three phases by studying current situation, problems and needs of the community, analysing the factors affecting community conflict on the use of water resources by focus group discussion, and developing community participation on conflict

resolution of water resources by community dialogue. Collection of data consisted of survey, focus group discussion and community dialogue. The study suggested Participatory action research as a significant factor to solve conflicts of water use and other problems.

METHODOLOGY

The study made use of descriptive research design, and was conducted in southwestern part of the country (Ekiti, Ondo and Oyo state) with a total population of 24,800 from five (5) local government areas in the three (3) states under study. These are Ondo State (7300 farmers and herders- Akure North LGA-Ogbese community and Iju/Itaogbolu community); Oyo State (15, 000 farmers and herders-Ibarapa East and North LGAs) – Eruwa/Lalate and Igangan/Ayete; and Ekiti State-2500 farmers and herders (Ise-Orun and Ikole LGAs) – Ise Ekiti and Oke-Ako (Ministry of Agriculture; Ondo, Oyo and Ekiti respectively). The reason for choosing the states and the subsequent local governments is because they have had a history of farmers and herders' conflicts over the years that have led to devastating destruction of properties and loss of lives. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used for representative collection of data. The first stage is the selection of three (3) states from the six (6) states in the Southwestern part of the country where farmers' & fulani herders' conflicts have been predominant in recent years. The second stage is choosing five (5) local governments; two (2) from Oyo state, two (2) from Ekiti state and one (1) from Ondo state where farmers and herders conflicts have been consistently happening in recent years. The third stage is to randomly choose 50 farmers and 50 herders in each of the states (Oyo, Ondo and Ekiti). The sample size, using Tarro Yamane (1967), was 300 respondents and the study used a well-structured questionnaire as a research instrument for method of data collection.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Hypothesis One:

Ho₁ There is no significant prospect in social inclusivity on reconciliation in managing farmers-herders' conflicts in Southwest, Nigeria

HA₁ There is a significant prospect in social inclusivity on reconciliation in managing farmers-herders' conflicts in Southwest, Nigeria

Table 4.1

Variable	Coeff.	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Constant	1.031	0.088	11.779	0.000
Social inclusivity	0.739	0.021	35.004	0.000
R	0.911			
R Square	0.829			
Adj. R Square	0.829			
F Stat.	1225.287(0.000)			

Source: E-view version 26, 2026

Dependent Variable: Reconciliation

To test this hypothesis, the respondents' scores on two variables of social inclusivity and reconciliation were computed and subjected to analysis. From Table 4.1, the R (correlation Coefficient) gives a positive value of 0.911; this indicates that there is a very strong and positive relationship between social inclusivity and reconciliation. The R² is a portion of the total variation in the dependent variable that is explained by the variation in the independent variables. From the results obtained, R² is equal to 0.829, this implies that social inclusivity brought about 82.9% variance in reconciliation, this is further proven by the adjusted R²

that shows the goodness of fit of the model which gives a value of 0.829, implying that when all errors are corrected and adjustments are made, the model can only account for 82.9% by social inclusivity; while the remaining 17.1% are explained by the error term in the model as shown in the unstandardized beta co-efficient of social inclusivity is 0.739 with $t = 35.004$ and $(p = 0.000 < 0.05)$. These results showed that social inclusivity has a positive relationship with reconciliation. The findings indicate that inclusive participation in decision-making processes fosters a sense of belonging, reduces discrimination and marginalization, enhances open communication, and strengthens peaceful coexistence. Based on the above result, it was discovered that social inclusivity on reconciliation has significant prospect in managing farmers/herders' conflicts in southwest Nigeria, and found out that fostering possibilities for cultural expression and familiarity as parts of reconciliation procedures is considered as crucial in order to lessen distrust and disputes between the two communities. The results show that the findings are consistent with those of Apipaalakul et al. (2017).

Hypothesis Two:

H₀₂ There is no significant prospect in trust-building on negotiation in managing farmers-herders' conflicts in Southwest, Nigeria.

HA₂ There is a significant prospect in trust-building on negotiation in managing farmers-herders' conflicts in Southwest, Nigeria.

Table 4.2

Variable	Coeff.	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Constant	-0.464	0.167	-2.782	0.006
Trust building	1.131	0.041	27.702	0.000
R	0.868			
R Square	0.753			
Adj. R Square	0.752			
F Stat.	767.423(0.000)			

Source: E-view version 26, 2026

Dependent Variable: Negotiation

To test this hypothesis, the respondents' scores on two variables of trust building and negotiation were computed and subjected to simple regression analysis. From Table 4.2, the R (correlation Coefficient) gives a positive value of 0.868; this indicates that there is a strong and positive relationship between trust building and negotiation. The R^2 is a portion of the total variation in the dependent variable that is explained by the variation in the independent variables. From the results obtained, R^2 is equal to 0.753, this implies that trust building brought about 75.3% variance in negotiation, this is further proven by the adjusted R^2 that shows the goodness of fit of the model which gives a value of 0.752, implying that when all errors are corrected and adjustments are made, the model can only account for 75.2% by trust building; while the remaining 24.8% are explained by the error term in the model as shown in Table 4.3.

The unstandardized beta co-efficient of trust building is 1.131 with $t = 27.702$ and $(p = 0.000 < 0.05)$. These results showed that trust building has a positive relationship with negotiation. This shows that openness and sincerity of farmers and herders in community affairs is widely perceived as a critical mechanism for reducing the incidence of conflicts. Therefore, the study found out that trust-building on negotiation has significant prospects in managing farmers/herders' conflicts in southwest Nigeria, and found out that the belief in the trust-building of negotiation, improving openness and trustworthiness during negotiations will reduce the incidence of crisis among the actors in the community. In order to promote peace and sustainable development in the community, trust-building is considered vital to provide representatives of

farmers and herders with dispute resolution training and nomadic schools, as considered by Abdu (2021).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concluded that when everyone has a say in making decisions, it makes people feel more included, lessens prejudice and exclusion, which improves communication, and makes it easier for people to live together peacefully. It is believed that a crucial step towards lowering suspicion and conflict incidence between the two groups is to provide chances for cultural expression and familiarity during reconciliation efforts. Furthermore, the study found that farmers and herders see intergroup marriages and social inclusion as viable options for mending fences. It is also safe to say, according to the study, that many people believe that a key strategy for lowering conflict rates is for farmers and herders to work together in community affairs. Participation in community development planning, leadership selection, and decision-making processes which cultivate a feeling of belonging, trust, and shared responsibility. Finally, building trust in negotiation initiatives and bolstering will help to attain lasting peace between the factions are both facilitated by the creation of community-based forums and inclusive leadership structures.

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