

INFLUENCE OF CROP FARMERS – HERDERS’ CONFLICT ON PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS’ JOB PERFORMANCE IN APA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, BENUE STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of crop farmers - herders’ conflict on primary school teachers’ job performance in Apa LGA, Benue State. Three (3) specific purposes guided the study, three (3) research questions were answered and three (3) null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The research design was ex-post facto. The population of the study comprised 729 primary school teachers from which a sample of 105 was drawn through multi-staged sampling procedure. The instrument for data collection was researcher-designed Teachers’ Job Performance Questionnaire (TJPQ) which was face validated by three experts. The internal consistency of the questionnaire items were established using the Cronbach Alpha reliability test with coefficient value of .757 obtained. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The t-test was used to test the null hypotheses 1 and 2, while 2-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses 3. The findings revealed that there was a significant influence of crop farmers - herders’ conflict on primary school teachers’ job performance. The implication of the findings is that primary school teachers’ job performance in Apa LGA is poor. The researcher, therefore recommends that adequate security is to be provided to safe-guard life and property and to ensure smooth running of school activities. The researcher suggests that a replica of this study should consider other locations outside Apa LGA where this conflict has lasted for many years.

Keywords: Crop-farmers, herders, conflict, job-performance, school

Introduction

In recent decades, Nigeria has witnessed a growing number of violent conflicts between crop farmers and nomadic herders, particularly in agrarian regions such as Benue State. These conflicts are primarily triggered by competition over access to land, water, and grazing routes, which have been exacerbated by environmental degradation, population growth, climate change, and weak land governance structures. Apa Local Government Area, one of the most affected zones in Benue State, has become a hotspot for these violent clashes, leading to displacement of rural communities, destruction of farmlands and infrastructure, and a breakdown in community cohesion. Beyond the immediate economic and humanitarian toll, the ongoing crisis has had profound implications for the education sector. Public primary schools, which are the foundation of basic education in rural communities, have become increasingly vulnerable. Teachers face threats to their safety, school premises are often abandoned or destroyed, and teaching and learning processes are routinely disrupted. In some cases, schools have been converted into temporary shelters for displaced persons, making it impossible for academic activities to continue. These conditions have led to absenteeism, reduced teacher morale, emotional trauma, and diminished instructional effectiveness.

The job performance of public primary school teachers measured through commitment, punctuality, lesson delivery, assessment of pupils, and classroom management has come under intense strain due to the prevailing insecurity. Many teachers have relocated, requested transfers, or resigned altogether due to persistent fear and psychological stress. The quality of education delivered to pupils in such conflict-ridden environments is therefore significantly compromised; further deepening educational inequality and undermining efforts to achieve universal basic education in the region. Specifically, crop farmers are persons who tend to field and manage the production of crops. Crop farmers are those who work in agriculture, or agronomy, and grow plants for food, fiber, and medicine that support and improve human life (Bisht, Mehta, Negi, Verma, Tyagi, & Garkoti, 2017). They are in charge of overseeing the development and harvesting of a variety of plant species, such as vegetables, fruits, cereals, and tubers (Monteiro, Cannon, Moubarac, Levy, Louzada, & Jaime, 2017). Crop farmers are defined in this study as people who grow and produce crops for human consumption, animal feed, or industrial use, including fruits, vegetables, cereals, tubers, and other agricultural goods. Thus, they can either own the land they farm or work on land owned by others, and their activities may involve a range of practices from planting and nurturing crops to harvesting and marketing the produce.

Herders are persons who own or manage a flock of animals. Chanamuto and Hall (2015), define herders as pastoral workers who are responsible for the care and management of a herd or flock of domestic animals, usually on an open pasture which typically includes livestock such as cattle, sheep, goats, or reindeer. In the view of Ofem and Inyang (2014), herders are persons who manage and oversee the animals' feeding, breeding, and protection from predators, often in outdoor environments. In this work, a herder is defined as a person whose work is to feed and manage grazing animals like sheep, goats, cattle, or horses nomadically from one open pasture to another in search of food and water. This practice of open grazing often lead to herders encroaching into farmers' farm which often leads to conflict between them. In Benue State, efforts has been made to minimize this conflict, by stopping herds' encroachment into farmers' farm. One of these efforts, is the enactment of the open grazing prohibition and ranches establishment law by Benue State Government in 2017 (Aligba, Omanchi & Gbakighir, 2018). The enactment of the open grazing prohibition and ranches establishment law appears unacceptable to herders (Gusa & Tijah, 2023). According to the authors, the aftermath of that law is that herders would deliberately move their herds into farmers' farm, farm lands and water sources. The herders would have their firearms ready to engage the farmers while the animals are grazing on their crops. If the farmer reacts violently, there will be a conflict.

Conflict refers to a situation where there are serious disagreements or opposing views among individuals or groups. Evgueni, Kovalenko and Viktor (2018) define conflict as a struggle and a clash of interest, opinion, or even principles. In the view of Din, Bibi, Karim and Khan (2014), conflict is when two people or groups disagree, and the disagreement causes friction. According to the authors, conflict results in heated arguments, physical abuses and definitely loss of peace and harmony. Conflict in this study refers to a violent hostility in which the parties involved resort to the use of arms and weapons. In Apa LGA of Benue State, there are two types of crop-farmers - herders' conflict which are: guerrilla warfare and kidnapping. These categories of the conflict have affected every sector of the society, especially primary school. Primary school is the foundation of formal education in Nigeria. Primary school refers to the institution of learning where education is provided to children between the ages of 6 and 12 years as

stipulated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014). Primary school is a formal level of education designed to be free and compulsory for children, officially, between the ages 6 to 12. It is also designed to provide basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills to pupils. Primary education which is of six (6) years duration is to be compulsory, free, qualitative and universal (FRN, 2014). In Apa LGA, primary schools are found in most rural areas, where the crop farmers - herders conflicts take place, for that reason, primary school programmes were terribly disrupted. The impact of this conflict on primary school teachers is worthy of note because of the key roles teachers play.

A teacher is a professional that facilitates and manages instructional and administrative activities in the classroom. According to Musodiq (2019), a teacher has been viewed as an expert who is capable of imparting knowledge that will help learners to build, identify and acquire skills that will be used to face the challenges in life. A teacher is an individual who plays a vital role in shaping the minds of pupils, helping them to acquire knowledge, skills, and values for success in life and as foundation for further studies. Apart from their fundamental role of teaching, teacher, builds a warm environment, mentors and nurtures pupils, become role model, and listens, mediates, look for signs of trouble and averts it (Musodiq, 2019). These roles teachers play in order to achieve the goals of the school is generally referred to as teachers' job performance. Job performance can be defined as all behaviours in which employees engage at work or as measurable actions, behaviours and outputs directly engaged in or indirectly caused by employees to serve organizational objectives (Adejumobi, & Ojikutu, 2013). The authors also view teachers' job performance, in broader terms, as the contribution of teachers to the achievement of educational goals and objectives. According to Limon and Sezgin-Nartgün, (2020) job performance can be viewed as the extent to which an employee can carry out the tasks successfully using the organizational resources under regular conditions. In simple terms, job performance refers to how well a staff member carries out their job responsibilities, gets their tasks done, and conducts themselves in the workplace (Limon & Sezgin-Nartgün, 2020). Operationally, job performance refers to the effectiveness and efficiency with which an employee carries out their job responsibilities, it is typically measured against specific criteria and expectations set by the employer. A peaceful atmosphere a teacher needs to perform his job well appears to be lacking in Apa LGA because of crop farmers – herders' conflict.

Statement of the Problems

Apa LGA was a peaceful place where everybody go about their normal activities including teachers. Teachers appear interested in their job which they did with dedication as schools open and close according to the academic calendar. Since the crop farmers-herders' conflict started, there is no more peace and tranquility. This situation has been of immense worry to the government, communities, families and the school stakeholders. Every effort made by the government failed, like the enactment of open grazing prohibition and ranches establishment law. The escalation of crop farmers – herders' conflict in Nigeria, in recent years, appeared to have impacted various aspects of rural life, including the education sector. In the Apa LGA, conflicts between crop farmers and herders are more prevalent during the dry season than the rainy season. When conflict arises in the dry season, people in affected communities, including teachers and pupils, are displaced and relocated to other communities. When the rainy season sets in and the conflict subsides, not everyone returns, including both male and female teachers. Many teachers choose to travel long distances from their new homes to their place of work, which consumes their time, energy, and

money. Some teachers abandoned their job and migrate to urban areas and settle there permanently for safety. Those who continue to attend to their jobs in schools are actively seeking other employment opportunities as they complain of not feeling safe. A situation like this can hypothetically affect both male and female teachers' performance. Understanding these impacts is crucial for developing strategies to support teachers in conflict-affected areas, ensuring the continuity and quality of primary school activities, and ultimately mitigating the effects of the conflict on primary school programme. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the extent to which the crop farmers–herders' conflict has influenced the job performance of public primary school teachers in Apa Local Government Area of Benue State. Understanding the relationship between this conflict and teacher performance is essential for informing policy interventions aimed at safeguarding the educational system in conflict-prone areas and ensuring that teachers are supported to carry out their duties effectively even in the face of insecurity. Hence the question: what is the influence of crop farmers–herders' conflict on primary school teachers' performance in Apa LGA, Benue State?

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of crop farmers–herders' conflict on primary school teachers' job performance in Apa Local Government Area of Benue State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the influence of crop farmers – herders' conflict on primary school teachers' job performance.
2. Ascertain the influence of gender on primary school teachers' job performance
3. Find out the interaction influence of crop farmers-herders conflict and gender on primary school teachers' job performance

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions.

- 1 What is the influence of crop farmers–herders' conflict on primary school teachers' job performance?
- 2 What is the influence of gender on primary school teachers' job performance?
- 3 What is the interaction influence of crop farmers-herders' conflict and gender on primary school teachers' job performance?

Hypotheses

The study was guided by the following null hypotheses and was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- Ho₁:** There is no significant influence of crop farmers-herders conflict on primary school teachers' job performance
- Ho₂:** There is no significant influence of gender on primary school teachers' job performance.
- Ho₃:** There is no significant interaction influence of crop farmers-herders conflict and gender on primary school teachers' job performance.

Methods

The section presents the methods adopted in carrying out the research. The research design is ex-post facto or causal comparative. According to Nworgu (2015), an ex-post facto or causal comparative research design is utilized when a study seeks cause-effect relationship in which the researcher cannot control or manipulate the variables of interest, but rather

links some already existing effects or observation to some variables as causative agent(s). The sample for the study was 105 teachers, made up of 60 males and 45 females. The sample size of 105 is more than 10% of the population (729) which, according to Martinez-Mesa, Gonzalez-Chica, Bastos, Bonamigo and Duquia (2014), is a good representation of the population. This sample was drawn using multi-stage sampling procedure. Stage one: out of eleven (11) wards in the LGA, seven (7) wards where crop farmers-herders' conflict takes place was purposively sampled. Stage two: three (3) schools each were randomly drawn from the schools in the seven wards using balloting. Stage three: three (3) male and two (2) female teachers were drawn using stratified sampling technique to get 105 participants. The instrument for data collection was researcher-designed Teachers' Job Performance Questionnaire (TJPQ). The instrument was face validated by three experts. One each from the departments of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Educational Foundations (Educational Psychology unit) and Measurement and Evaluation, Department of Science Education; all from the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The trial-testing of the instrument to determine its internal consistency and reliability, using the Cronbach Alpha reliability test, yielded reliability co-efficient of .757. This indicated that the instrument was highly reliable and adequate for the study. The researcher administered the instruments to the respondents, using direct delivery and retrieval methods, with the help of three research assistants who were thoroughly briefed on the modalities of administration and collection of the instrument. All the 105 copies of the questionnaire administered were retrieved because of the direct delivery and retrieval method used. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. Then t-test was used to test hypotheses 1 and 2 while two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test hypothesis 3 at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

This unit presents the results of the data analysis in line with the study's research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question One: What is the influence of crop farmers-herders conflict on primary school teachers' job performance?

Table 1: Mean analysis of the influence of crop farmers-herders conflict on primary school teachers' job performance

Farmers-Herders Conflict	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Guerrilla Attack	65	34.48	10.98
Kidnapping	40	27.70	10.77

Table 1 indicates that primary school teachers who experience guerrilla attack due to crop famers-herders conflict had mean job performance of ($M = 34.48$, $SD = 10.98$) while primary school teachers who experience kidnapping due to crop famers-herders conflict had mean job performance of ($M = 27.70$, $SD = 10.77$). This means that primary school teachers who experience guerrilla attack due to crop famers-herders conflict had higher mean job performance than those who experience kidnapping.

Table 2: t-test analysis of the influence of crop farmers-herders conflict on primary school teachers' job performance

Farmers-Herders Conflict	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Dt	t	P
Guerrilla Attack	65	34.48	10.98	104	3.817	.042
Kidnapping	40	27.70	10.77			

Table 2 reveals that there is a significant influence of crop farmers-herders conflict on primary school teachers' job performance in favour of those who experience guerrilla attack, $t(104) = 3.817, p = .042$. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected since the associated probability of .042 is less than the .05 level of significance. This implies that kidnapping influences primary school teachers' job performance more than the guerrilla attack.

Research Question Two: What is the influence of gender on primary school teachers' job performance?

Table 3: Mean analysis of the influence of gender on primary school teachers' job performance

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	60	32.48	10.14
Female	45	33.51	11.70

Table 3 indicates that male primary school teachers had mean job performance of ($M = 32.48, SD = 10.14$) while female primary school teachers had mean job performance of ($M = 33.51, SD = 11.70$). This means that female primary school teachers had higher mean job performance than the male teachers.

H₀₂: There is no significant influence of gender on primary school teachers' job performance.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the influence of gender on primary school teachers' job performance

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Dt	t	P
Male	60	32.48	10.14	104	-1.479	.142
Female	45	33.51	11.70			

Table 4 reveals that there is no significant influence of gender on primary school teachers' job satisfaction, $t(104) = -1.479, p = .142$. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected since the associated probability of .142 is greater than the .05 level of significance. This implies that gender does not influence primary school teachers' job performance.

Research Question Three: What is the interaction influence of crop farmers-herders conflict and gender on primary school teachers' job performance?

Table 5: Mean analysis for interaction influence of crop farmers-herders conflict and gender on primary school teachers' job performance

Farmers-Herders Conflict	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Guerrilla Attack	Male	45	32.22	10.53
	Female	20	39.33	10.59
Kidnapping	Male	16	27.71	9.23
	Female	24	27.69	11.86

Table 5 indicates that male primary school teachers who experience guerrilla attack due to crop famers-herders conflict had mean job performance of ($M = 32.22, SD = 10.53$) while male primary school teachers who experience kidnapping due to crop famers-herders conflict had mean job performance of ($M = 27.71, SD = 9.23$). Similarly, female primary school teachers who experience guerrilla attack due to crop famers-herders conflict had mean job performance of ($M = 39.33, SD = 10.59$) while female primary school teachers who experience kidnapping due to crop famers-herders conflict had mean job performance

of ($M = 27.69$, $SD = 11.86$). This means that while female primary school teachers who experience guerrilla attack due to crop famers-herders conflict had higher mean job performance than the male teachers who experience, the male primary school teachers who experience kidnapping due to crop famers-herders conflict had higher mean job performance than the female teachers.

Ho₃: There is no significant interaction influence of crop farmers-herders conflict and gender on primary school teachers' job performance.

Table 6: 2-way analysis of variance for interaction influence of crop farmers-herders conflict and gender on primary school teachers' job performance

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	809.719 ^a	3	269.906	2.367	.075
Intercept	108048.871	1	108048.871	947.430	.000
Farmers-Herders Conflict	506.408	1	506.408	4.810	.018
Gender	227.992	1	227.992	1.999	.160
Farmers-Herders Conflict * Gender	360.809	1	360.809	3.164	.078
Error	11632.507	102	114.044		
Total	133622.000	105			
Corrected Total	12442.226	104			

Table 6 reveals that there is no significant interaction influence of crop farmers-herders conflict and gender on primary school teachers' job performance, $F(1, 102) = 3.154$, $p = .078$. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected ($p > .05$). This means that the influence of crop farmers-herders conflict on primary school teachers' job performance is not dependent on gender.

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the influence of crop farmers and herders' conflict on primary school teachers' job satisfaction. Several key findings emerged from the current study. The finding of the study indicates that, primary school teachers who experience crop famers-herders' conflict had lower mean job performance than those who did not experience the conflict. It was further found that there is a significant influence of crop farmers-herders conflict on primary school teachers' job performance in favour of those who experience guerrilla attack. The result is expected because teachers can hardly perform their duties effectively, when there is no peace and safety in the environment where they work. Other forms of conflicts and at different settings have also been found to influence job performance. Udeogu and Onyeizugbe (2024) found that workplace conflict has a statistically significant relationship with employees' performance in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. Isidore (2022), found that there is a significant relationship between organizational conflict and employee job performance. The reasons why conflicts have been found by different studies to influence job performance may be as a result of the hostile environment created by conflict which undermines teachers' ability to do their job effectively.

The finding of the study revealed that there is no significant influence of gender on primary school teachers' job performance. The result is not a surprise because in a work setting affected by conflict, teachers face similar challenges regardless of gender, which likely, leads to comparable performance outcomes. The finding of this study aligns with the result of the study by Agbor, Etta and Etonde (2022) which found that teachers, irrespective

of gender, are impacted by safety concerns, curriculum delivery, and classroom management, which can overshadow any gender-related differences in performance. Similarly, Ajoku and Alikor (2022), in their study found that gender has no significant influence on teachers' job performance. In a place where both male and female teachers experience similar levels safety concern, it is likely that gender will not inherently influence performance outcomes. Furthermore, Ajoku and Alikor assert that the effectiveness of teachers in conflict areas tends to be more closely related to their experience and qualifications rather than their gender. However, some researchers found that gender has significant influence on job performance. According to Yasmeen, Blouch and Khan (2022), gender has significant effect on employee performance. Gender may affect job performance, probably because of difference in ability to work and cope with work related stress and emotional trauma which men tend to have more than women.

The finding revealed that, there is no significant interaction influence of crop farmers-herders conflict and gender on primary school teachers' job performance. The result is expected because, in this study, gender had been found to have no significant influence on primary school teachers' job performance. For that reason, when it interacts with crop farmers – herders' conflict which had been found to have significant influence on job satisfaction, the finding changes in favour of variable with stronger influence. The finding aligns with the finding of Adedeji and Damilola (2016) who found that there was no significant interaction effect that existed between gender, job status, and the level of motivation on work performance. According to the authors the negative impact of armed conflict is not gender bias, this probably account for the finding of their research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, crop-farmers and herders' conflict significantly influence primary school teachers' job performance in Apa LGA. It can therefore be stated that, as long as crop farmers-herders' conflict continues, primary school teachers' job performance will not improve. Furthermore, primary school teachers' job performance due to crop-farmers and herders' conflict, in Apa LGA is not based on gender. This implies that both male and female teachers are affected.

Recommendations

This research was undertaken to investigate the influence of crop-farmers and herders conflict on primary school teacher' job performance in Apa LGA of Benue State. Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were made.

1. The government should live up to expectations in providing security for citizens both in the school host communities and in the school premises.
2. Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), should use all lawful means to draw the attention of government to their plight for needed intervention.

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