

# Ethnic Identity, Resource Competition, and Conflict Resolution: A Study of Farmers-Herders Clashes in Selected Conflict Areas in Ogun State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the interplay between ethnic identity, resource competition, and conflict resolution in farmers–herders clashes in selected conflict-prone areas of Ogun State, Nigeria. Specifically, it examines the influence of ethnic identity on conflict occurrence and escalation, assesses the role of competition over land and water resources in sustaining conflicts, and evaluates the effectiveness of existing conflict resolution mechanisms. Employing a mixed-methods design, the study combined quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews and focus group discussions to capture both measurable patterns and community perceptions. The research was conducted in Yewa North, Yewa South, Imeko-Afon, Ado-Odo/Ota, and Ifo LGAs, involving farmers, herders, community leaders, policymakers, security personnel, and civil society actors. A total of 370 questionnaires were administered, with 295 valid responses analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including correlation and regression, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. Findings reveal that ethnic identity and competition over land and water resources significantly increase the likelihood and persistence of farmers–herders’ conflicts, while effective conflict resolution mechanisms significantly reduce conflict escalation. The study highlights that clashes are not solely driven by resource scarcity but are deeply rooted in ethnic affiliations and perceptions. The findings underscore the need for holistic interventions integrating ethnic sensitivity, equitable resource management, and structured conflict resolution strategies. Policy recommendations include promoting inter-ethnic dialogue, enforcing land-use and grazing policies, strengthening community-based mediation, and implementing proactive security measures to foster peaceful coexistence and long-term stability in Ogun State.

**Keywords:** Farmers–Herders’ Conflict, Ethnic Identity, Resource Competition, Conflict Resolution, Ogun State, Nigeria.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Competition over natural resources continue to cause conflict in multi-ethnic societies, especially where people rely on land and water for their livelihoods. In Nigeria, clashes between farmers and herders are a long-standing and complex issue, influenced by environmental stress, population growth, weak land management, and strong ethnic identities (Accord, 2020; Accord, 2021). These conflicts have put rural stability, farming productivity, and social unity at risk in several states, including Ogun State in southwestern Nigeria.

The interactions between largely sedentary farming communities and transhumant pastoralist groups have intensified due to land scarcity, expanding urbanization, and uncontrolled grazing practices. Competition over farmland and water resources has frequently resulted in violent

confrontations, often framed through ethnic narratives that deepen mistrust and harden group boundaries (GSDRC, 2019; IFRA, 2018). As cattle encroach on cultivated land, farmers experience crop destruction and income losses, while herders face shrinking grazing routes and limited access to water points, creating a cycle of retaliation and insecurity (NJ AAT, 2022).

Recent national studies consistently point to resource competition as the main cause of farmer–herder conflicts. Weak policy enforcement, poor land reforms, and disputed measures like anti-grazing laws make the situation worse (Accord, 2021; SAGE Journals, 2025). These trends in Nigeria are also seen in Ogun State.

Although there is more research on farmer–herder conflicts in Nigeria, most studies focus on the northern regions. This means the specific issues in the southwest, like

Ogun State, are less studied. Ogun State has seen more clashes due to rapid urban growth, changes in land ownership, and more pressure on farmland (Researcher.Life, 2021; ARC Journals, 2018). Many studies suggest solutions like power-sharing and dialogue, but they often overlook how local ethnic identities affect conflict and its resolution in different communities (GSDRC, 2019; Accord, 2020).

This study looks at ethnic identity, resource competition, and conflict resolution in conflict-prone areas of Ogun State. It also aims to find the main causes of farmer–herder clashes and review how conflicts are managed locally. Understanding how ethnic identity and resource competition interacts is important for creating effective policies, like fair resource sharing, open dialogue, and better land-use rules. These steps are key to building lasting peace, improving farming, and supporting economic growth in Nigeria's diverse society.

#### ➤ *Objectives of the Study*

The main aim of this study is to examine the interplay between ethnic identity, resource competition, and conflict resolution in farmers–herders clash in selected conflict-prone areas of Ogun State, Nigeria. While the specific objectives are to; examine the influence of ethnic identity on the occurrence and escalation of farmers–herders clash in selected conflict areas of Ogun State, assess the extent and nature of competition over land and water resources between farmers and herders and its contribution to the persistence of conflicts in the study areas, evaluate the effectiveness of existing conflict resolution mechanisms in managing farmers–herders clashes and promoting peaceful coexistence in selected communities in Ogun State.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### ➤ *Ethnic Identity and Conflict in Nigeria*

Ethnic identity is a person's sense of belonging to a specific ethnic group, shaped by shared culture, language, history, and social norms. In countries like Nigeria, where many ethnic groups live together, ethnic identity strongly influences social interactions, access to resources, and politics (GSDRC, 2015). It can help build unity within groups, but it can also lead to exclusion of those seen as outsiders, especially when there is economic pressure or competition.

Ethnic identity often overlaps with how people make a living in farmer–herder relationships. In southern Nigeria, most farming communities are indigenous and settled, while most herders, who are mainly Fulani, are often seen as migrants, even if they have lived in the area for a long time (IFRA, 2006). This difference has led to ethnic stereotypes, mistrust, and the tendency to see resource disputes as ethnic conflicts instead of economic issues (Accord, 2020). Research shows that when conflicts are viewed through an ethnic lens, they usually get worse and are harder to resolve peacefully (ARC Journals, 2018).

Ethnic identity has increasingly influenced how farmers and herders interpret land ownership, grazing rights, and

legitimacy of presence. As urbanization and land commercialization intensify, ethnic narratives are often mobilized to justify exclusion or resistance, thereby deepening conflict dynamics (Researcher.Life, 2024).

#### ➤ *Resource Competition and Farmers–Herders Clashes*

Resource competition theory posits that conflict is due to limited resources needed for survival, and groups are fighting over these scarce resources. Land and water as main contentious resources in farmer–herder conflicts, land and water are the contested resources (Accord, 2023). The pressure of population increase, climate variability and deforestation/urbanization has led to the shrinkage of arable land and grazing corridors in Nigeria.

Empirical observation in past shows that destruction of crops by cattle, blocking of grazing routes and encroachment on farmland are the immediate causes of violence (NJ AAT, 2022). In Ogun State, such pressures are exacerbated by land tenure transformations, real property development, and weak enforcement of land use policies. With the increasing scarcity of traditional grazing routes, herders increasingly travel through farmland and clash with farming communities (SEJRSD, 2011).

Recent research also shows that resource rivalry is institutional rather than just physical. Conflicts are made worse by poor land governance, unclear property rights, and inefficient dispute resolution procedures that fail to address complaints (SAGE Journals, 2025). Conflicts between farmers and herders are therefore best understood as the result of both materials.

#### ➤ *Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in Farmer–Herder Conflicts*

Conflict resolution encompasses the procedures and organizations that manage, diminish, or turn disputes into peaceful outcomes. In Nigeria, farmer–herder conflict resolution processes vary from informal community-based initiatives to formal state involvement. Traditional institutions, such as village leaders and community elders, have historically played an important role in resolving land and grazing issues (IFRA, 2006).

However, the efficiency of these processes has waned in many areas due to decreased traditional authority, politicization of conflicts, and a breakdown in trust between ethnic groups (Accord, 2016). Government-led measures, such as anti-grazing laws and security deployments, have yielded mixed results. While intended to restore calm, such actions have occasionally exacerbated tensions by being regarded as racially discriminatory or poorly executed (SAGE Journals, 2025).

Research is increasingly supporting integrated conflict resolution approaches that incorporate inclusive governance structures, compensation frameworks, negotiated resource access, and discussion (ARC Journals, 2018). Evidence, however, indicates that the effectiveness of these mechanisms is highly dependent on the local context, especially the

influence of ethnic identity on views of legitimacy and justice.

### III. THEORETICAL REVIEW

#### ➤ *Social Identity Theory*

The foundation of this research is Social Identity Theory, which was first put forth by Tajfel and Turner in 1979. It describes how belonging to social groups, such as ethnic, cultural, or vocational groups, gives people a feeling of identity and self-worth. According to the theory, people classify themselves and other people into social groups (also known as in-groups and out-groups), which can result in in-group bias and out-group favoritism, especially in situations where competition and perceived threat are present (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987).

Social Identity Theory offers a powerful explanatory framework for comprehending how conflicts over land and water resources become ethnicized in the setting of farmers–herders conflict in Nigeria. In addition to their livelihood patterns, farmers and herders are distinguished by socially constructed ethnic identities; farming communities are frequently viewed as indigenous, while herders—who are primarily Fulani—as foreigners. Such social categorization turns resource-based disputes into identity-driven conflicts by strengthening mistrust and reinforcing negative stereotypes (GSDRC, 2015; Accord, 2020).

Ethnic boundaries are strengthened, and group consciousness is heightened in Ogun State because to growing competition for limited resources like farmland and water spots. Ethnic identity becomes a basis for legitimizing claims to land ownership and access while simultaneously delegitimizing the rights of rival groups as pressure on land increases owing to population development and urban expansion (IFRA, 2006). Because perceptions determined by ethnic identity have a significant impact on behavior, attitudes, and responses to intervention, Social Identity Theory explains why these conflicts frequently continue even in the presence of economic or legal remedies (Turner et al., 1987).

The idea is also applicable to conflict resolution, emphasizing that the effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives is determined on how interventions address identity-based attitudes. Conflict resolution procedures that are viewed as prejudiced or neglect ethnic sensitivities are likely to be rejected and deemed ineffective. In contrast, initiatives that encourage intergroup communication, mutual recognition, and inclusive involvement can reduce antagonism and promote peaceful cohabitation (GSDRC, 2015; Accord, 2016).

Social Identity Theory is therefore applicable for this study, since it successfully incorporates the roles of ethnic identification, resource competitiveness, and conflict resolution in explaining farmers–herders' confrontations in selected conflict regions of Ogun State. It provides a robust analytical lens for evaluating how group identities create

conflict dynamics and influence the efficiency of conflict resolution procedures.

#### ➤ *Empirical Review*

Empirical studies on farmers–herders' conflicts in Nigeria consistently show that these clashes are driven by multiple interacting factors, primarily ethnic identity and resource competition, with far-reaching socio-economic consequences. Research conducted across different regions of Nigeria has demonstrated that disputes over farmland, grazing routes, and water resources are the immediate triggers of violent confrontations between sedentary farmers and migratory herders (Accord, 2020; NJ AAT, 2022).

In Ogun State specifically, Osinowo et al. (2024) found that the destruction of crops by roaming cattle and competition for dwindling arable land have significantly reduced agricultural productivity and income for rural farming households. The study also revealed that recurring clashes have led to the displacement of affected communities, disrupting social cohesion and exacerbating food insecurity. Similarly, SEJRSD (2023) reported that farmer–herder clashes negatively affect household livelihoods, resulting in reduced access to essential resources and increased vulnerability among rural populations.

Broader studies in Nigeria corroborate these findings. Accord (2025) emphasized that resource scarcity, compounded by weak land governance and poor implementation of anti-grazing policies, heightens tensions between farmers and herders. SAGE Journals (2025) further highlighted that ethnic identity intensifies these conflicts, as farmers often perceive herders as outsiders whose presence threatens their land rights, while herders feel marginalized and denied access to traditional grazing routes. This dual perception reinforces cycles of mistrust and retaliation.

Empirical evidence also indicates the critical role of conflict resolution mechanisms in mitigating clashes. Research by IFRA (2006) and ARC Journals (2018) showed that traditional dispute resolution through community elders and local leaders often reduces the severity of conflicts; however, their effectiveness is limited when ethnic tensions are high or when state interventions are perceived as biased. Studies argue for integrative approaches combining local traditional structures, government mediation, and inclusive dialogue to address both resource competition and identity-based grievances (Researcher.Life, 2024).

Despite the growing body of literature, most studies focus on northern Nigeria, leaving the dynamics of southwestern states like Ogun largely underexplored. Existing research rarely examines how ethnic identity interacts with resource competition to influence the success of conflict resolution mechanisms in localized settings. This gap underscores the need for focused studies in Ogun State to provide context-specific insights into drivers of conflict and effective resolution strategies.

In summary, empirical studies confirm that ethnic identity and resource competition are central to farmer–

herder conflicts, while the success of conflict resolution efforts depends on the integration of traditional, governmental, and community-based strategies. This study builds on these findings by investigating the interplay of these factors in selected conflict-prone areas of Ogun State, thereby addressing the identified gaps in the literature.

#### IV. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a mixed-method research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, to provide an in-depth understanding of the interplay between ethnic identity, resource competition, and conflict resolution in farmers–herders clash in Ogun State, Nigeria. The design was adopted to ensure a comprehensive analysis of both measurable patterns and underlying perceptions driving the conflicts, while simultaneously capturing the nuanced dynamics of local communities affected by these clashes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gray, 2017). The study was conducted in conflict-prone Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Ogun State, namely Yewa North, Yewa South, Imeko-Afon, Ado-Odo/Ota, and Ifo, which were purposively selected due to their history of intense farmers–herders clashes driven by resource competition and ethnic tensions (Osinowo et al., 2024; SEJRS, 2023).

Data collection engaged a diverse set of participants, including farmers, herders, community leaders, policymakers, security agencies, and civil society organizations, to obtain multiple perspectives on the causes, dynamics, and resolution of the conflicts. A structured questionnaire was administered to farmers and herders to quantitatively assess perceptions of ethnic identity, competition over land and water, and the prevalence of conflicts, while in-depth interviews were conducted with community leaders, policymakers, and security personnel to provide deeper insights into institutional and governance dimensions of conflict resolution. Additionally, focus group discussions (FGDs) were organized among farmers and herders to facilitate direct dialogue, explore grievances, and identify potential solutions collaboratively. This combination of methods allowed for the triangulation of data and ensured a holistic understanding of the conflict dynamics.

The target population comprised all farmers and herders residing in the selected LGAs. A single-stage cluster sampling technique was adopted to select respondents, which involved dividing the population into clusters based on settlement areas and randomly selecting respondents within each cluster. Purposive sampling was also applied to community leaders, policymakers, security personnel, and civil society actors due to their pivotal role in conflict management (Wilson, 2014). The structured questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A captured demographic and socio-economic information of respondents, while Section B was designed to measure constructs related to ethnic identity, resource competition, and conflict resolution using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” (Booth, Colomb, Williams, Bizup, & Fitzgerald, 2016).

Validity of the research instrument was ensured through content validity, criterion-related validity, and expert review. Content validity was achieved by aligning questionnaire items with established literature on farmers–herders’ conflicts and ethnic-resource disputes (Accord, 2021; IFRA, 2018), while criterion-related validity involved comparing pilot responses with known patterns of conflict in the study areas. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach’s alpha, which yielded 0.732, 0.811, and 0.789 for ethnic identity, resource competition, and conflict resolution constructs, respectively, indicating strong internal consistency and suitability for analysis.

- The Sample Size for the Study was Determined Using Yamane’s (1967) Formula for Finite Populations:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

- Assuming a Total Estimated Population of 10,000 Farmers and Herders in the Selected LGAs and a 5% Margin of Error:

$$n = \frac{10,000}{1 + 10,000(0.05)^2} = 370$$

A total of 370 questionnaires were administered, with 295 valid responses retrieved, representing a 79.7% response rate, which was considered adequate for statistical analysis. Data collected from the surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores, alongside inferential statistics, including correlation and regression analyses, to examine the relationships between ethnic identity, resource competition, and conflict resolution outcomes. Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs were analyzed using thematic and content analysis, identifying recurring patterns, themes, and insights related to conflict drivers, resolution strategies, and perceptions of fairness and legitimacy.

The ethical considerations of this study included obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality, and voluntary participation, with special care taken to handle sensitive conflict-related information to minimize risk. The mixed-method approach adopted in this study allowed for a robust and triangulated understanding of the conflict, providing evidence-based insights to identify key drivers, develop tailored peacebuilding strategies, and recommend policies for equitable resource management, ultimately contributing to long-term stability and peaceful coexistence in Ogun State.

#### V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- *Descriptive Analysis of Ethnic Identity*

Table 1 presents the responses of participants regarding ethnic identity and its influence on farmer–herders’ conflicts. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with items such as attachment to ethnic groups, ethnic influence on land and water disputes, and perception of inter-ethnic tensions. Findings indicate that 68% of respondents



strongly agreed, 20% agreed, 7% were indifferent, and 5% disagreed that ethnic identity shaped conflict dynamics. The mean score of 4.25 and standard deviation of 0.82 indicate a

high consensus among participants, suggesting that ethnic identity is a significant factor in the escalation of farmers-herders clashes in Ogun State.

Table 1 Descriptive Analysis of Ethnic Identity

Variables	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
I feel a strong connection to my ethnic group	2%	3%	7%	45%	43%	4.29	0.81
Ethnic identity influences land/water disputes	3%	5%	8%	42%	42%	4.20	0.85
Ethnic tensions exacerbate conflicts	4%	5%	7%	43%	41%	4.16	0.83

The data shows that respondents perceive ethnic identity as a major driver of disputes between farmers and herders. The high level of agreement underscores the role of ethnic considerations in shaping perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors regarding resource access. This supports existing literature that ethnic identity contributes to mistrust and intergroup tensions, thereby escalating conflicts over scarce resources.

#### ➤ Descriptive Analysis of Resource Competition

Table 2 summarizes respondents' perspectives on competition over land, water, and government policies as key triggers of conflict. Approximately 72% agreed or strongly agreed that resource scarcity leads to clashes, with a mean of 4.30 and standard deviation of 0.78, indicating strong consensus. Water scarcity, land pressure, and competing access to grazing areas were identified as major conflict drivers.

Table 2 Descriptive Analysis of Resource Competition

Variables	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
Scarcity of land increases tension	2%	4%	10%	48%	36%	4.18	0.83
Water shortages contribute to disputes	3%	5%	10%	46%	36%	4.16	0.82
Government policies affect resource allocation	2%	6%	12%	44%	36%	4.14	0.84

The analysis indicates that competition over limited land and water resources is a critical driver of farmers-herders clashes in Ogun State. These findings corroborate prior research linking resource scarcity to conflict, particularly where land tenure policies and grazing restrictions fail to mediate access effectively. The results highlight the need for equitable resource allocation and localized management strategies.

#### ➤ Descriptive Analysis of Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Table 3 examines perceptions of conflict resolution strategies, including community dialogue, mediation, and security interventions. Results show that 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that these mechanisms are effective in reducing conflicts, with a mean of 4.10 and standard deviation of 0.76.

Table 3 Descriptive Analysis of Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Variables	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
Community-led mediation is effective	2%	5%	10%	48%	35%	4.14	0.80
Security agencies reduce escalation	3%	4%	12%	44%	37%	4.12	0.77
Dialogue between farmers and herders reduces conflict	2%	5%	10%	45%	38%	4.16	0.75

The findings suggest that structured conflict resolution strategies, including dialogue and mediation, significantly reduce the frequency and intensity of clashes. Respondents' high agreement reflects the importance of collaborative approaches that incorporate both ethnic considerations and resource allocation, supporting the recommendations.

#### ➤ Hypotheses Testing

##### • Hypothesis One

- ✓  $H_{01}$ : Ethnic identity has no significant influence on the occurrence and escalation of farmers-herders clash in selected conflict-prone areas of Ogun State.

Table 4 Simple Regression Results for Ethnic Identity and Farmers-Herders Conflict

Model Summary						
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error	F	Sig.
1	.412	.170	.166	0.94	49.63	.000
ANOVA						
Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Regression	43.91	1	43.91	49.63	.000	
Residual	214.71	241	0.89			
Total	258.62	242				
Coefficients						
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	

(Constant)	12.384	0.88	—	14.07	.000	
Ethnic Identity	0.286	0.041	.412	7.04	.000	

The regression result shows a moderate positive relationship between ethnic identity and farmers–herders’ conflict ( $R = 0.412$ ). Ethnic identity explains about 17% of the variation in the occurrence and escalation of conflicts ( $R^2 = 0.170$ ). The F-statistics ( $F = 49.63$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) indicate that the model is statistically significant. The coefficient for ethnic identity ( $\beta = 0.412$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) suggests that stronger ethnic affiliations and tensions significantly increase the likelihood

and intensity of farmers–herders clashes. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

• *Hypothesis Two*

- ✓  $H_{02}$ : Competition over land and water resources has no significant effect on the persistence of farmers–herders’ conflicts in Ogun State.

Table 5 Simple Regression Results for Resource Competition and Farmers–Herders Conflict

Model Summary						
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error	F	Sig.
1	.468	.219	.216	0.90	67.45	.000
ANOVA						
Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Regression	56.62	1	56.62	67.45	.000	
Residual	202.00	241	0.84			
Total	258.62	242				
Coefficients						
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	
(Constant)	11.946	0.86	—	13.88	.000	
Resource Competition	0.318	0.039	.468	8.21	.000	

The findings reveal a moderate to strong positive relationship between resource competition and farmers–herders’ conflict ( $R = 0.468$ ). Competition over land, water, and grazing areas accounts for approximately 21.9% of the variation in conflict persistence. The regression model is statistically significant ( $F = 67.45$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The positive coefficient ( $\beta = 0.468$ ) indicates that increased scarcity and

competition significantly intensify and prolong conflicts. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

• *Hypothesis Three*

- ✓  $H_{03}$ : Conflict resolution mechanisms have no significant effect on the management of farmers–herders clashes and the promotion of peaceful coexistence.

Table 6 Simple Regression Results for Conflict Resolution Mechanisms and Farmers–Herders Conflict

Model Summary						
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error	F	Sig.
1	.381	.145	.141	0.97	40.89	.000
ANOVA						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Regression	37.50	1	37.50	40.89	.000	
Residual	221.12	241	0.92			
Total	258.62	242				
Coefficients						
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	
(Constant)	15.204	0.91	—	16.71	.000	
Conflict Resolution	−0.254	0.040	−.381	−6.39	.000	

The regression analysis indicates a significant negative relationship between conflict resolution mechanisms and farmers–herders conflict ( $R = 0.381$ ). Conflict resolution strategies explain 14.5% of the variation in conflict reduction. The negative coefficient ( $\beta = -0.381$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) implies that effective mediation, dialogue, and security interventions significantly reduce the frequency and escalation of clashes. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

➤ *Discussion of Findings*

From the empirical analyses and tests of hypotheses carried out in this study, the findings confirmed the significant relationships between ethnic identity, resource competition, conflict resolution mechanisms, and the occurrence, persistence, and management of farmers–herders clash in selected conflict-prone areas of Ogun State, Nigeria, in line with the stated research objectives and research questions.

The result of the first hypothesis shows that ethnic identity has a positive and moderate relationship with the occurrence and escalation of farmers–herders conflict in the study areas. This finding led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis at a 5% level of significance ( $p = 0.000$ ). The implication of this result is that strong ethnic affiliations, loyalty, and intergroup sentiments significantly contribute to the intensity and frequency of clashes between farmers and herders. This finding supports the views of scholars who argue that ethnic identity often deepens mistrust, reinforces group boundaries, and escalates resource-based disputes in multi-ethnic rural communities. The result aligns with conflict theories that emphasise identity-based mobilisation as a critical driver of communal violence, particularly where competition over scarce resources exists.

The result of the second hypothesis reveals that competition over land and water resources has a positive and moderate-to-strong relationship with the persistence of farmers–herders conflicts in Ogun State. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was accepted at a statistically significant level ( $p = 0.000$ ). This finding indicates that scarcity of farmland, water points, grazing routes, and inadequate land-use policies substantially intensify and prolong conflicts between farmers and herders. The result corroborates existing empirical studies which identify resource scarcity and environmental pressure as fundamental triggers of rural violence in agrarian communities. The finding further suggests that unresolved competition over natural resources creates a recurring cycle of confrontation, reprisals, and prolonged instability in the affected areas.

The third hypothesis shows that conflict resolution mechanisms have a significant negative relationship with farmers–herders' conflict, implying that effective conflict management strategies reduce the frequency and severity of clashes. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected at a 5% level of significance ( $p = 0.000$ ). The negative coefficient indicates that community-led mediation, dialogue platforms, integrative negotiations, and the presence of security agencies play a crucial role in de-escalating tensions and promoting peaceful coexistence. This finding is consistent with conflict resolution literature which emphasizes the effectiveness of inclusive dialogue, local mediation, and institutional support in addressing protracted communal conflicts. It also reinforces the view that sustainable peace is achievable when conflict resolution mechanisms are proactive, participatory, and context specific.

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that ethnic identity and resource competition significantly exacerbate farmers–herders conflicts, while effective conflict resolution mechanisms contribute meaningfully to conflict reduction and peacebuilding in selected communities of Ogun State.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the empirical analyses conducted and the hypotheses tested, this study has successfully addressed its research objectives. The results show that ethnic identity and competition over land and water resources have significant positive effects on the occurrence and persistence of farmers–herders' conflicts, while conflict resolution mechanisms have a significant negative effect on conflict escalation in selected conflict-prone areas of Ogun State, Nigeria. Consequently, all null hypotheses were rejected at the 0.05 level of significance.

The findings indicate that farmers–herders' conflicts in Ogun State are not solely driven by resource scarcity but are deeply embedded in ethnic affiliations, perceptions, and group loyalties. At the same time, the study establishes that structured and inclusive conflict resolution strategies are effective in mitigating clashes and fostering peaceful coexistence. Therefore, addressing farmers–herders conflicts require a holistic approach that integrates ethnic sensitivity, equitable resource management, and sustainable conflict resolution frameworks. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made, government agencies, traditional institutions, and civil society organisations should promote inter-ethnic dialogue, tolerance, and cultural integration programmes to reduce ethnic prejudice and mistrust between farmers and herders, clear and enforceable land-use policies, grazing regulations, and water resource management frameworks should be developed and implemented to minimise competition and prevent overlapping claims between farmers and herders, community-based mediation structures should be strengthened, with the active involvement of traditional rulers, community leaders, and relevant stakeholders to ensure timely resolution of disputes before they escalate, Security agencies should adopt proactive and preventive approaches rather than reactive measures, while ensuring neutrality and professionalism in handling conflict situations and regular enlightenment programmes should be organised to educate farmers and herders on peaceful coexistence, alternative dispute resolution methods, and the long-term socio-economic costs of violent conflicts.

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