

Resolving Wildlife Staff Versus Farmers Conflict In Nigeria Through Peace Education

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Abstract: *Wildlife workers versus farmers' conflict is constituting a serious threat to peaceful co-existence, food security as well as national security in Nigeria. The study thus, examined the role of peace education in resolving wildlife staff versus farmers' conflict. The study identified four (4) socio-economic effects of wildlife staff versus farmers' conflicts namely: food insecurity, poverty, farmers' displacement, erosion menace and loss of lives. Peace strategies for managing wildlife staff versus farmers' conflict include: withdrawal, force, accommodation and compromise. Based on the findings, the study recommends among others, that government should organise peace summit involving all major stakeholders such as traditional leaders, religious leaders, youth leaders, political leaders, farmers associations and wildlife workers.*

Key words: Conflict, Farmers, Peace Education, Wildlife

Introduction

The Federal Government of Nigeria has continued to adopt education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national peace, security and development. The Federal Republic of Nigeria stipulated in her national policy on education, Federal Ministry of Education (2014) stated that Education will be provided for all citizens and that efforts will be made to relate education to all community needs. Ezegebe (2013) opined that education is the crucial factor, for without it, Africans would be unable to enter in modern technological world. It is thus, axiomatic that the control and planning of education is an issue of crucial magnitude. In fact, the type of education suited for Nigerian population is peace education. The interaction of peace attributes in all aspects of education and at all levels of education is of utmost importance, because no nation can attain national growth and security in the atmosphere of war, crisis, rancour among its citizens. It was on this premise that Ezegebe (2013) averred that in a modernizing society only education can open the door to political control and economic advancement.

Peace Education is being considered as a panacea for social reconstruction and national security in Nigeria (Riitta, 2016). Peace education is the hub of conflict management that can proffer proactive measure to Nigerian present problems. This is because the incessant communal and tribal boundary conflicts as well as ethnic conflicts in Nigeria have, in large extent, marred the social and economic development of the nation (Ayodele & Adegeye, 2020).

Conflict is the lack of peace and harmony in an area. It is the presence of acrimony, rancour and war in the society. A condition of clash between two or more individuals or parties is referred to as conflict. According to Lewis (1992) in Bono, Ashrat and Zia (2013), conflict is a disagreement between two or more people. It occurs when two or more people take different and opposing views in a situation, expressed verbally or in actions. Conflict ranges from a very mild disagreement to complete breakdown in a relationship. To Francis (2013), conflict is the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups. Conflict is said to occur when one party perceives the action of another party as blocking the opportunity for the attainment of a goal. Thomas (1976) in Ajai (2017) corroborates that conflict is a process which begins when one party perceive that the other has frustrated, or is about to frustrate some concern of his. That is any divergence of interests, objectives or priorities between individuals, groups or organisations or non-conformity to requirements of a task, activity or process (Simons, 1992 in Ajai, 2017).

However, in the context of this paper, conflict is the struggle between two interdependent parties (wildlife staff and farmers) who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources and interference from wildlife staff in achieving the goals of farmers. The nature of the occurrence of conflict in society is multifaceted; therefore, individuals need to apply various means for resolving conflict. Conflict resolution is an attempt to control or regulate conflict through various measures. It is the stage in which one or more approaches of conflict management is adopted in an attempt to resolve the conflict for harmonious working relationship to achieve their goals (Okodoko, 2011). Riitta (2016) lamented that there are two main conflicts that constitutes a serious threat to food security in Nigeria viz: farmers versus herders conflict and wildlife staff versus crop farmers conflict. The main thrust of this paper is wildlife staff versus farmers' conflict.

Wildlife Management Concept

Wildlife is a diverse resource. There are many species of population even on small areas. Each species of population is influenced by its behaviour and physiology and many factors of its environment: foods, weather, soils, predators and land use practices, for example. Therefore, wildlife management is the application of knowledge about wildlife and about all these factors. According to Bailey (2013), wildlife management is the art of making land produce valuable populations of wild animals. Wildlife management involves direct population management (control of harvest, transplanting, etc.) and indirect management of populations through habitat manipulation to favour or inhibit target species.

The principles of wildlife management include some that are specific to the profession and many that are shared with other professions and sciences. Therefore, the education of a wildlife manager should include study not only of wildlife biology and management, but also of basic sciences, such as chemistry and meteorology, and applied sciences related to land use, such as forestry, agriculture and economics.

Rationale for Wildlife Production

Wildlife is a traditional source of meat in Africa. Due to unregulated hunting of wildlife for meat and trophies, wildlife had declined tremendously or at an alarming rate during the 20th century. The aggravation of this situation is attributed to increasing demands for wildlife by-products in the market. Furthermore, although Africa is blessed with the greatest diversity of wildlife, it has contributed very little to the world of domestic animals and a reason for this is not clear. It was probably due to the greatest abundance of wildlife from which the prehistoric African could always make their choices; there was therefore, no real urge to develop the technology involving domestication.

However, the cost of production of domestic livestock has soared considerably in recent years, Africa is now compelled more than ever before to domesticate some of its fast breeding and socially accepted wild animals (Adegeye, Akinyemi & Ayodele, 2010). The production of animal source of protein, has not been high enough to meet the demands. FAO (2015) decried that livestock production in developing countries is generally at 1.5 – 2.0% per annum while demand is growing at 45% annually. FAO (2017) therefore, advocated for an increase in livestock production and an intensification of management of non-conventional sources of animal protein.

Undoubtedly, wildlife management provides a possible means of achieving this objective. It was on this premise that wildlife management is being considered as an integral part of the United Nations Development (UNDP) 5th Country Programme, targeted at the relatively rural poor communities as a means of producing cheap source of animal protein for consumption and for generating income. This was the basis for which wildlife farming schemes, as village community participatory project, were established in Malawi and other South-African countries (Ajayi & Allagenyi, 2012).

Importance of Wildlife Conservation

Ojiako (2013) expound that the needs to conserve wildlife include the followings:

1. **Food (Protein) supply** – Wildlife is still the main source of protein supply to many homes in Nigeria. A reasonable percentage of the animal protein requirements of the fourteen (14) Southern States of Nigeria are obtained from wildlife. Wildlife has an obvious advantage over domestic animals. Apart from being more resistance to diseases, wild animals contain less water and fat per unit of carcass weight than the domesticated livestock.
2. **Foreign Exchange Earning** – Foreigners, especially Americans and Europeans, are always interested in African wildlife. The wildlife industries in Nigeria and East African countries had attracted a lot of tourists into those countries. Besides payment of landing fees and buying of tickets at the gates, other sectors of the economy also share in the proceeds from tourism. Tourists pay hotel bills and buy souvenirs and also patronize the transport sector by hiring taxi cars to ease their movement (Ajiwon, 2022).
3. **Export of Life Animal** – Over the years, Nigeria has made substantial revenue from the exportation of life animals and trophies to other parts of the world. Exported animals include: baboons, monkeys, spotted hyenas, pythons, giant snails, bush fowls and wild guinea fowls. Trophies exported include elephant tusks and elephant tails.
4. **Sport Hunting and Fishing** – Some of the tourists visiting Nigeria are professional or commercial hunters. They are allowed to engage in hunting/fishing controlled areas, and are accompanied by game, during the hunting and fishing expedition. This is to ensure that animals are not killed indiscriminately. Fees paid for sport hunting include: fire-arms license, general hunting license, hunting controlled area fee and animal tariff fee per animal killed. This brings a lot of revenue to the country. This contrast sharply with the use of Dane guns, bows and arrows, and traps/snares by our local hunters which oftentimes sets the animal free only to die and rot away subsequently (Suwari, 2017).
5. **Nature Conservation** – Animals do not live-in thin air. They walk on land and may also live-in water. They require vegetation to provide cover, fruits, nuts and forage and also take water and salts. The conservation of wildlife, automatically ensures the conservation of soil, water and vegetation (Osinem, 2005).

6. **Employment Opportunities** – The wildlife industry offers a lot of employment opportunities to the people of Nigeria. Professional wildlife experts are employed in our various game reserves, zoo and Wildlife Administration Departments. Employment is also being offered to rangers, patrol guards, security men and the technical officers. As a matter of policy, the junior staff earning between salary grade levels 01 to 06 are usually drawn from the local community (Osinem & Mama, 2008).

Conservation for Posterity

It is moral obligation for us in the present generation to preserve and pass on the posterity, the rich wildlife heritage of our country. Posterity would never forgive us if, through our selfishness and carelessness, we destroy our wildlife heritage which is meant for us and generations yet unborn (Youdeowei, Ezedinma & Onazi, 2014).

Wildlife Staff versus Farmers Conflict

A forest reserve is a land owned by public or communities but acquired by the government by negotiation for the purpose of establishment of trees and wildlife kept or reserved with good management. Such establishment conserved for wildlife is referred to as game reserve (FAO, 2017). Wildlife is conserved in game reserves to provide zoological gardens, which act as tourist centres and provide revenue for the government among other values. Game reserves in Nigeria include: Yankari in Bauchi State, Borgu Games Reserve in Kwara State, to mention but a few.

There is a consensus among observers that wildlife staff versus farmers clashes have been in existence since the 20th century in the coastal countries of West Africa, since such conflict was an old phenomenon (Ofuoko & Isife, 2019). Tonah (2016) indicted that the factors that orchestrated the increasing wildlife staff versus farmers conflicts include: wildlife population growth, deforestation, flood, fire, explosion of farming activities, encroachment of forest reserves, ecological imbalance, biodiversity destruction, indiscriminate killing of wildlife through shooting with guns, trapping and use of snare among others.

Tonah (2016) decried that since the 1950s, there has been a rise in human activities as well as climate change and drought problems in the coastal countries of West Africa. Consequently, there is an acute deforestation, defoliation, famine etc. grossly affecting the sustainable development of wildlife. Tonah (2016) expounded on the Sahelian drought of the 1970s and 1980s, and the accompanying migration of a diverse number of wildlife into the fringes of the humid forest zones of West Africa. Indeed, there has been a massive increase of the incidence of wildlife staff versus farmers' conflict.

Ajayi and Allagenyi (2012) corroborated that since the 1950s, there has been a growth in human as well as increased demand for cheap source of animal protein in the coastal countries of West Africa. This gave rise to an increased pressure on natural resources and a stiff competition for available resources between wildlife staff and the farmers.

Socio-Economic Effects of Wildlife Staff versus Farmers Conflict

1. There is reduction in the output and income of crop farmers occasioned by the destruction of crops by wildlife. Shagari, Bello and Umar (2013) lamented that many farmers lost part or the whole of their crops. This meant reduced yield which had culminated into low income on the part of the farmers who depend on their farming as a major occupation. This tends to negatively affect their savings, credit repayment ability, as well as food security and economic welfare of urban dwellers that depend on these farmers for food supply. This discourages the farmers and rural agricultural development (Rashid, 2021).
2. **Displacement of Farmers:** Dan Chima (2015) decried that farmers were displaced as well as forest staff. In some host communities, farmers relocate as a result of conflict. Host farmers, especially women who remain behind, stop going to the farms close to the game reserves for fear of attack by the forest guards and rangers. Such displaced farmers became a source of liability to other farmers whom they have to beg for food for the survival of their families. This has created a vicious cycle of poverty in such communities.
3. **Erosion:** Erosion is an agent of land degradation as a result of deforestation, grazing which causes a lot of loss of soil nutrients and problems of cultivation. The exposure of the soil makes it susceptible to erosion which is worsened by the rain. This is accelerated by the topographic nature of some of the areas, which are hilly.
4. **Loss of Lives:** Ofuoko and Isife (2019) reported that a lot of killing by the forest workers and reprisal killing of forest staff by the host communities took place during the conflicts. Crop belonging to the farmers were wantonly destroyed by the foresters while the fence of the game reserve was vandalized by the farmers, leading to the escape of wildlife. The process of the conflict inflicted some victim's injuries and others maimed. This had reduced some female farmers to the status of widows. Consequently, there is drastic reduction of agricultural labour force in the area. In the process, there are reported cases of proliferation of small arms and ammunitions since the host farming communities and the forest workers saw each other as archenemies. Similarly, twenty-seven (27) persons lost their lives due to conflicts between nomadic herders and

farmers in Bayelsa State of Nigeria within the period of 2010 and 2022. This is, indeed, appalling and inimical to the spirit of integration of Nigerian tribes or ethnic groups and peaceful co-existence.

Strategies for Managing Wildlife Staff Versus Farmers Conflicts

There are several strategies that could be adopted to resolve or manage conflict between wildlife staff and farmers. The application of an appropriate method, to a large extent, hinges on the competency of the worker and the prevailing circumstances therein. The strategies herein are by no means exhaustive but include the following: force, withdrawal, accommodation and compromise.

1. **Force** – Conflict can be managed through force, where the forest staff has the means and inclination to win regardless of whether the farmers losses, and whether or not the process of winning causes damage to personal relationships. The use of force by forest workers will largely, depend upon, the power conferred on them by the government. Some of the obvious uses of force in conflict management include: physical violence, threat of physical violence, exertion of economic dominance (including buying-out opponents); corruption of government officials, judges and blackmail. That is recourse to the legal system is a form of force in that the forest workers can use their superior resources to “buy” better advice or raise the stakes (for example, by taking a lost case to an appeal court). Some less obvious but often no less powerful forms of force include: adversarial (i.e., uncompromising) negotiation tactics, political expediency, manipulation of valid matters, use of the media to rally public support, public protest, ‘witch hunts’, slander and the threat of withdrawal.
2. **Withdrawal** – Withdrawal is an approach to conflict management suited to those parties whose desire to avoid confrontation outweighs the goals they are trying to achieve. The power (either positive or negative) of withdrawal should not be underestimated, not least since it can be used as a threat to force reluctant and sometimes more powerful parties to negotiate in a more consensual fashion. Types of withdrawal include: withdrawal of funding; avoidance of volatile locations within the game reserve, certain stakeholders opting out of a project or a negotiation process; deployment of delaying tactics; postponing project decisions; temporary boycotts and strikes (i.e., withdrawal of labour).
3. **Accommodation** – There are occasions when a farmer in a conflict situation values a strong and continuing relationship with wildlife staff in the attainment of its own specific goals. In these cases, a farmer may decide to accommodate the goals of wildlife staff, conceding to all or most of their demands. Although such outcomes may look as though they have been the result of force, the difference is that rather than losing outright, the accommodating farmer perceives itself to have gained by way of securing good relations, accompanied perhaps by an element of good will and the option to achieve same grater goal symbiotically at a future date.
4. **Compromise** – Compromise is often confused with consensus. To compromise in a negotiation may sound positive, but it means that at least one of the parties either farmers or wildlife staff perceives that it has to forgo something. In farm/wildlife planning, compromise is based on the need to make rational resource allocation decisions.
5. **Consensus** – Although processes of consensus-building sometimes contain elements of compromise within the final agreement, there are some key differences between the two approaches. Consensus-building explicitly sets out to avoid trade-offs altogether, seeking instead to achieve a ‘win-win’ outcome. In contrast, a compromise approach seeks to minimize what are considered to be inevitable trade-offs. The fundamental principles of consensus building are to steer conflicting parties away from:
 - ❖ negotiating over their immediate demands and hostile positions, towards addressing those underlying needs which are the true motivating factors behind each side’s perception of the conflict;
 - ❖ thinking about only one solution, towards considering the widest possible and most creative range of options for meeting the parties’ underlying needs;
 - ❖ personalized and often exaggerated demands, towards clarity and precision in describing parties’ underlying needs and the range of proposed options.

Conclusion

Wildlife workers versus farmers’ conflict constitutes a serious threat not only to food security but also to peaceful co-existence and national security. The paper thus, examined the role of peace education in resolving wildlife staff versus farmers’ conflict in Nigeria. The study identified four (4) socio-economic effects of wildlife staff versus farmers’ conflicts viz: reduction in farmers’ productivity and income, farmers displacement, erosion problems and loss of lives. In furtherance of these effects, four (4) peace strategies for managing wildlife staff versus farmers’ conflict were found viz: withdrawal, force, accommodation, compromise and consensus. If these findings are thus, packaged into training manual for farmers, wildlife workers, extension agents and religiously implemented, it will restore peace, harmony and national security.

Recommendations

Based on its findings and conclusion, the study recommends that:

1. The government should organise peace summit involving all stakeholders.
2. Peace education and campaign should be intensified through various media.
3. Peace education strategies should be adopted in managing wildlife staff versus farmers' conflicts.
4. Wildlife should be restricted strictly to game reserves.

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