

# Education, Conflict Resolution Strategies and National Development: A Case Study of Ethiopia East, Delta State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This study focused on how education can be used as a tool for resolving conflict between herdsmen and farmers in Ethiopia East Local Government Area of Delta State in particular and Nigeria by extension. This was predicted by the spate of conflict and insecurity in the country and avoidable attacks of herdsmen on farmers resulting in not only displacement of hundreds of people and entire communities but compounding the poverty situation and the national development woes and the urgent need for proffering possible solutions. The descriptive ex post facto design was adopted for the study. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study comprised all traditional leader, farmers and herdsmen in Ethiopia East. The sample consist of 150 farmers (traditional leaders, opinion leaders, the elite, youths and women leaders) and 50 herdsmen (leaders of the groups within the area owners of herds and paid herders). The multi-stage sampling technique adopted. Consequently, the cluster sampling technique was used to group the people; from which were assigned to the group base of the stratified sampling technique. The accidental sampling technique was also adopted. The instrument for data collection was a 4-point rating structured in-depth interview guide developed by the researcher. 200 respondents were interviewed in small groups of tens by the researcher and ten guide researcher assistants. Mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis and interpretation while t-test statistical tool was used for the test of hypotheses. Findings in the study revealed among others that: there are inherent conflicts between herdsmen and farmers as a result of perceived attack on cows by farmers on one side and attacks on farms and farmers resulting in killing of several people and sacking of entire communities on the other side complicated by lack of communication due to illiteracy and inability to speak English Language for expression. It was also revealed that education of the people through regular orientation, seminars and workshops on the need for harmonious relationship and coexistence could foster tolerance, understanding of the values of others, negotiation, dialogue and resolution of pending conflict. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that, Delta State government should as a matter of urgency set up a herdsmen/farmers' conflict management agency and empower it to serve with all diligence, transparency and sincerity; and that government should regularly organize peace and conflict resolution seminars and workshops for farmers and herdsmen, not only in Ethiopia East but across the state at large

**Keywords:** Education, conflict, conflict resolution and national development.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Human societies are complexly structured with different components relating with one another for continuity and development. At the centre of this structure is man; who tends to moderate the relationship and interactions between him and the other components of society. Sometimes he (man) influences the outcome of the relationship and interactions seeking to attain desirable results that would give him some essence of dominance on the entire structure (Ritzer, 2008). This sense of dominance leads to power struggle among individual members of groups which sometimes culminate into conflict.

Conflict is an integral part of human existence and a major problem in any given human society. This is so because, man himself is conflict oriented due to insatiable quest for power, wealth, freedom and control over others; which sometimes infringe on the rights of others who may want to resist ((Ritzer, 2008). Conflict is sometimes a product of dissatisfaction occasioned by perceived exclusion from decision making, injustice, inequitable distribution of social amenities, and encroachment traditionally acquired land among others. In which ever form it takes, it is called conflict.

According to Francis (2009:20) conflict is “the pursuit of incompatible interest and goals by different groups.” This implies that conflict can be ideological, intellectual, political, religious, cultural and economic. Cultural and economic conflict are sometimes integrated into the political sector by those in power. In such situations, ethnic and tribal interest are usually projected higher than national interest. According to Deinye and Morrison (2011) cited in Morrison (2018), when tribal and ethnic interest are priced above national interest, social, political, religious, cultural and economic conflict becomes eminent and inevitable. In most cases economic conflict overshadows every other form of conflict because it envelops every human endeavor. When economic conflict is experienced, the consequences are usually grave if not handled with care because it affects the entire social structure; it is otherwise called structural conflict. Structural conflict can result in violence which may include poverty, hunger, discrimination, apartheid, maiming, killing, and many others. Structural violence is a major obstacle to peace and national

development (Ibanu, 2006). When such is experienced, education seems to be the way out of the unhealthy situation. It is concerned with the transformation of culture of war to a culture of peace, culture of crime to a culture of creativity, culture of discrimination to that of integration and the culture of killing and maiming to that of sanctity of lives. It is through education that politics, religious, inter communal and international relation are studied and put to practice (Francis 2006). In other words, only through the instrumentality of education that such conflict can be addressed.

Education is the process through which worthwhile values are transmitted from one generation to another. It is the process through which human faculties are developed to reflect the needs of the society (Okoh, 2004). Perhaps, it is in the light of the above that the development and investment in education is gaining prominence in virtually every nation the world over. Any nation that fails to provide for the education of the citizens should expect to witness structural conflict and violence.

Nigeria is currently under structural violence. This is manifested in the several violent crimes predicated on poverty. According to Fitch International (2016), "the level of poverty (productivity index) in Nigeria has maintained a constant rise, reaching its all-time high of 72 percent by August 2016." This implies that 72 out of every 100 persons are not only poor but are living below poverty level (one dollar per day). In a statement credited to Theresa May, the United Kingdom Prime Minister, "87 million Nigerians live below \$1 and 90 cents a day, making it home to more very poor people than any other nation in the world (Kayode, 2018). This level of poverty in itself is conflict which can degenerate to violence of different kinds due to struggle for survival and scramble for limited resources. Part of such experiences is the herdsman and farmers' conflicts in the North Central Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria also called the Middle Belt. The development has spread to other states and Geopolitical zones such as Delta, Edo, Rivers, Anambra, Enugu and Imo States. According to Eyekpimi (2016), herdsman attacked and killed over 80 people believed to be farmers. In another development, a nongovernmental organization, the Coalition on Conflict Resolution and Human Rights in Nigeria was reported by the Sahara Reporter (2018) to have said that over 2000 lives have been lost to violent activities and clashes between herdsman and farmers in the country. These colossal losses could not be out-rightly detached from illiteracy factors. This is because a good number of the herdsman are believed to be illiterates. Olateju (2010:1) remarked that "the need for adequate functional English literacy and numeracy instruction for the herdsman in Osun State in Nigeria arose as a result of the persistent clashes between the herdsman and their neighbors." The essence was to enhance communication and conflict resolution skills for the herdsman who were believed to be very aggressive and violent due to lack of communication abilities and skills. It is not enough to develop communication ability without adequate or prerequisite

knowledge of conflict resolution strategies. The reason is simple. Highly educated people also involve in conflict. What makes the difference is the degree of violence attached to the conflict. Hence, there is the need for educating the people on conflict resolution strategies.

Conflict resolution strategies are efforts or techniques put in place by people to control or curb conflict. It is the process of peace-building in an already conflict infested area. According to Muddaser (2002), conflict resolution strategies are deliberate effort taken to manage conflict so that it will not become violent. Such efforts require some skills that also require intelligent application. Doyle (2018) sees conflict resolution strategy as a process which must be initiated by a seemingly neutral person or group of persons. The scholar identified some elements of the process to include; assertiveness, interviewing and active listening skills, empathy, facilitation, mediation skills, creative problem solving and accountability. When conflict has graduated to wanton destruction of lives and properties, to the extent of taking pleasure in crime, then urgent need for resolving such conflict becomes eminent before it degenerates into out-right civil war.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The struggle for independence in Nigeria was a collective effort that brought people from different regions together to fight for a common goal. The struggle had no much regards for cultural and religious differences but rather saw strength in the unity of the most culturally diversified nation in Africa. However, recent developments in the nation question the foundation upon which the unity of the nation hinges. Advancements in technology promote economic activities in human societies. Economic activities no doubt, promote unhealthy competition that sometimes results in economic, political, religious and social conflicts. This is more endemic in underdeveloped countries like Nigeria; perhaps, due to the standard and quality of educational practices and the level of illiteracy in the area. Nigeria records more than ten million out-of-school children in spite of the Free Basic Education scheme practice in the country. In recent times, Nigeria is infested with mirage of social, economic and religious conflicts that threaten the continued unity of the nation. One wonders if this could be linked to the increasing illiteracy rate which could inhibit possible strategies that could foster conflict resolution and thus national development. For instance, Ahon, Brisibe, Yafugborhi and Akuopha (2017) quoted the Governor of Delta State to have raised the alarm over the incessant killing of farmers by herdsman. In another development, Akinyemi and Ahon (2018) in a report, quoted two prominent Nigerians to have noted that thousands of people had been killed and communities destroyed, while many farmers and pastoralists had lost their lives in the orgy of killings. One wonders what could be responsible for alleged herders attack on farmers in their (farmers) farm land? Sometimes attempts to resist such attacks result in reprisal attacks with one complaint or the other as reasons to justify

their attack. The reasons for the attacks may not be necessary here but how they can live in harmony is the main driver.

*Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to determine the ways through which education can enhance conflict resolution strategies for national development. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Find out the main causes of herders and farmers clashes in Ethiopia East, Delta Sate
2. Find out how education can be used to foster negotiation between herders and farmers in their economic activities.
3. Find out how education can be used as a tool for peaceful coexistence and interdependency between herders and farmers.

*Research Questions*

The following research question guided the study

1. What are the perceived causes of herders and farmers clashes in Ethiopia East L.G.A of Delta State?
2. In what ways can education be used to foster negotiation between herders and farmers in their economic activities?
3. How can education be used to restore peaceful coexistence and interdependency between herders and farmers in Ethiopia East?

*Research Hypotheses*

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

1. There is significant difference in the mean opinion of farmers and herders on the causes of conflict among them.
2. There will be significant difference in the mean opinion of farmers and herders on negotiation as an instrument for conflict resolution.
3. There is significant difference in the mean opinion of farmers and herders on the role of education in fostering peaceful coexistence and interdependence.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive expost facto design. Three research question and three hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study comprised all traditional leader, farmers and herders in the area. The sample consisted of 150 farmers (traditional leaders, opinion leaders, youths and women leaders) and 50 herders (leaders of the groups within the area owners of herds and paid herders). The multi-stage sampling technique was used. Consequently, the cluster sampling technique was used to group the people; from which quotas was assigned to the group base of the stratified sampling technique. The accidental sampling technique also adopted. This was predicted by those who were involved in

the study. An 18-item in-depth Interview Guide with 4-point rating scale developed by the researcher was used for data collection. The use of In-depth Interview guide was necessitated by the literacy level of the respondents. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering research questions while t-test was used in test of hypotheses.

IV. RESULTS

*Research Question 1:* What are the perceived causes of herders and farmers clashes in Ethiopia East L.G.A of Delta State?

Table 1: Herders Responses on the Perceived Causes of Herders and Farmers Clashes in Ethiopia East L.G.A. of Delta State.

S/N	Interview item	SA	A	D	SD	x	SD	Decision
1	Do you agree that there is any trouble between you and farmers?	50	0	0	0	4.00	0.00	Agree
2	The problem is due to attempts to restrict your pasturage	40	5	3	2	3.66	0.77	Agree
3	Part of the problem is rustling of cows	5	6	20	19	1.94	0.96	Disagree
4	Not actually rustling but attack on the cows over grazing	30	5	3	12	3.06	1.28	Agree
5	It is due to poor expression of grievances	25	12	6	7	3.10	1.09	Agree
6	It is just the nature of our trade	4	2	21	23	1.74	0.88	Disagree
	Grand mean					2.91	0.83	Agree

Table 1 shows that all the herders interviewed agreed that there is conflict between herders and farmers who are the traditional owners of the farm lands. Items 2, 4, and 5 were also agreed to by the herders. However, items 3 and 6 were disagreed with. It is an indication that farmers had no interest in restricting the herders from grazing neither is conflict associated with their trade. It further indicates that rustling is not a strong factor fueling clashes but attempts to kill the cows. The grand mean value of 2.91 and standard deviation of 0.83 strengthen the level of agreement to the issues raised.

Table 2: Farmer Responses on the Perceived Causes of Herders and Farmers Clashes in Ethiopia East L.G.A. of Delta State.

S/N	Interview item	SA	A	D	SD	x	SD	Decision
1	Do you agree that there is any trouble between you and farmers?	150	0	0	0	4.00	0.00	Agree
2	The problem is due to attempts to restrict your pasturage	57	49	27	12	3.04	0.96	Agree
3	Part of the	21	25	59	45	2.15	1.01	Disagree

	problem is rustling of cows							
4	Not actually rustling but attack on the cows over grazing	31	68	23	28	2.68	1.01	Agree
5	It is due to poor expression of grievances	15	42	50	43	2.19	0.97	Agree
6	It is just the nature of our trade	0	22	48	80	1.61	0.73	Disagree
	Grand mean					2.61	0.78	Agree

Table 2 shows that all farmers selected for the study agree 100% that there exists conflict between farmers and herdsmen. They (farmers) also agreed with items 2 and 4 which is an indication that herders destroy both crops and lives of the farmers through assault. However, farmers disagreed with items 3, 5 and 6 which also indicate that entry into the farms is not the basic issue. It is not also poor expression of grievance; neither is conflict associated with farming but unprecedented attacks on farmers. The grand mean value of 2.61 and standard deviation of 0.78 (agreement) concretized farmers' position

**Research Question 2:** In what ways can education be used to foster negotiation between herders and farmers over clashes economic activities?

Table 3: Herders Responses on the Ways Education can be used to Foster Negotiation Between Herdsmen and Farmers over Clashes in Ethiope East L.G.A. of Delta State.

S/N	Interview item	SA	A	D	SD	x	SD	Decision
7	You can read and write in English	5	6	23	16	2.00	0.93	Disagree
8	You can speak English	0	0	25	25	1.50	0.51	Disagree
9	Do you agree that communication gap is one of the causes of clashes between you and farmers?	25	17	2	6	3.22	1.00	Agree
10	Don't you agree that, if you can communicate meaningfully with farmers clashes would be controlled?	27	12	11	0	3.32	0.82	Agree
11	Do you agree that negotiation with farmers on how to graze can end clashes?	23	5	7	15	2.72	1.33	Agree
12	Would you agree to keep to the conditions if negotiated?	23	5	9	13	2.76	1.29	Agree
13	Do you agree that there be peaceful coexistence if negotiated?	23	7	13	7	2.92	1.14	Agree
	Grand mean					2.63	1.17	Agree

Table 3 shows that herdsmen are not educated in formal education; they cannot speak, read nor write in English Language. This makes communication with farmers difficult. Herders agreed with items 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 but disagreed with items 7 and 8. The agreed cases are indicative that good communication channel and medium and negotiation are basic educational necessities. The grand mean value of 2.63 and standard deviation of 1.17 confirm their stand.

Table 4: Farmers Responses on the Ways Education can be Used to Foster Negotiation between Herdsmen and Farmers Over Clashes in Ethiope East L.G.A. of Delta State.

S/N	Interview item	SA	A	D	SD	x	SD	Decision
7	You agree, you can read and write in English	13	25	59	53	1.99	0.93	Disagree
8	You can speak English	57	24	34	35	2.69	1.20	Agree
9	Do you agree that communication gap is one of the causes of clashes between you and farmers?	58	49	31	12	3.02	0.96	Agree
10	Don't you agree that, if you can communicate meaningfully with farmers clashes would be controlled?	58	12	24	56	2.48	1.33	Disagree
11	Do you agree that negotiation with farmers on how to graze can end clashes?	59	45	24	22	2.94	1.07	Agree
12	Would you agree to keep to the conditions if negotiated?	59	47	23	21	2.96	1.05	Agree
13	Do you agree that there be peaceful coexistence if negotiated?	12	13	57	68	1.79	0.91	Disagree
	Grand mean					2.54	1.06	Agree

Table 4 shows that most farmers cannot read and write in English but can speak English to some extent. They also agreed with item 9 that communication gap is one major source of conflict between herders and farmers. However, they (farmers) disagreed with items 7, 10 and 13 which suggest that even if communication link is established, clashes will persist, though agree that negotiation can curb clashes and agreed that they Farmers) would abide by the terms of

negotiation if initiated. The grand mean of 2.54 and standard deviation of 1.06 support the result.

*Research question 3:* How can education be used to restore peaceful coexistence and interdependency between herders and farmers in Ethiopia East?

Table 5: Herders’ Responses on the Ways Education can be Used to Restore Peaceful Coexistence and Interdependency between Herders and Farmers in Ethiopia East.

S/N	Interview item	SA	A	D	SD	x	SD	Decision
14	Do you agree that:							
15	Education can help you to tolerate with farmers?	23	7	12	8	2.90	1.16	Agree
16	Education can help you understand the farmers' plight?	23	10	7	10	2.92	1.19	Agree
17	Education can help you to dialogue on perceived conflict?	27	12	8	3	3.26	0.94	Agree
18	Education can help you to dialogue on perceived conflict?	9	5	23	13	2.20	1.03	Disagree
19	Education can help you resolve issues without violence?	20	5	9	16	2.58	1.31	Agree
	Grand mean					2.77		Agree

Table 5 shows that herders all the items except item 17 which implies that education has nothing to do with herders’ views about the opinion of others but believe that education can make to tolerate, understand, dialogue and resolve issues without violence. The mean value of 2.77 confirms the projection.

Table 6: Farmers Responses on the Ways Education can be Used to Restore Peaceful Coexistence and Interdependency between Herders and Farmers in Ethiopia East.

S/N	Interview item	SA	A	D	SD	x	SD	Decision
14	Do you agree that:							
15	Education can help you to tolerate with herders?	24	25	59	42	2.21	1.03	Agree
16	Education can help you understand the herders' plight?	50	50	29	21	2.86	1.03	Agree
17	Education can help you to dialogue on perceived conflict?	75	29	24	22	3.05	1.12	Agree
18	Education can help you to	70	37	20	23	3.03	1.10	Disagree

	dialogue on perceived conflict?							
19	Education can help you resolve issues without violence?	77	36	23	14	3.17	1.01	Agree
	Grand mean					2.86		Agree

Table 6 reveals that farmer agree with all the items but disagree with item 14. It reveals that farmers do not believe in education as a tool for tolerating perceived enemies but believe in education to promote understanding, dialogue, value other people’s opinion and resolve issues without violence.

*Test Hypotheses*

The test of hypothesis was based on the mean responses of both groups on each of the issues raised. It is therefore presented as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean opinion of farmers and herders on the causes of conflict among them.

Table 7: Test of relationship between herders and farmers mean opinions on the causes of conflict between the two groups.

Category	$\sum f$	$\bar{x}$	SD	Standard error	DF	T-Cal.	T-Crit	Decision
Herdsman	12.06	2.01	0.26	0.76	25.67	-2.99	2.29	Accepted
Farmers	15.66	2.61	0.29					

In table 7, figures available shows that the mean values for herdsman and farmers are 2.01 and 2.61 respectively. The standard deviations are 0.26 and 0.29 respectively. The standard error is 0.76, degree of freedom is 25.67 while the t-calculated and the t-critical are -2.99 and 2.29 respectively. The rule guiding the test of hypothesis using t-test states that; where the t-calculated is greater than the t-critical, the hypothesis should be rejected and the alternative accepted but where the t-calculated is less than the t-critical, it should be accepted. By virtue of the figures in the table, the t-calculated is significantly less than the t-critical. Consequent upon the stated rule, the hypothesis is accepted and the alternative rejected. That is to say, both herdsman and farmers agree on the issues responsible for conflict between them.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean opinion of farmers and herdsman on negotiation as an instrument for conflict resolution.

Table 8: Test of relationship between herders and farmers mean opinions on negotiation as instrument for conflict.

Category	$\sum f$	$\bar{x}$	SD	Standard error	DF	T-Cal.	T-Crit	Decision
Herdsman	18.41	2.63	0.26	1.04	34.19	0.49	1.85	Accepted
Farmers	17.78	2.54	0.35					

In table 8, figures available shows that the mean values for herdsmen and farmers are 2.63 and 2.54 respectively. The standard deviations are 0.26 and 0.35 respectively. The standard error is 1.04, degree of freedom is 34.19 while the t-calculated and the t-critical are 0.49 and 1.85 respectively. The figures show that the t-critical is significantly higher than the t-calculated. Based on the established rule, hypothesis 2 is accepted and the alternative rejected.

*Hypothesis3:* There is significant difference in the mean opinion of farmers and herders on the role of education in fostering peaceful coexistence and interdependence.

Table 9: Test of relationship between herders and farmers mean opinions on the role of education in fostering peaceful coexistence and interdependency.

Category Σf	$\bar{x}$	SD	Standard error	DF	T-Cal.	T-Crit	Decision
Herdsmen 13.85	2.77	0.30	0.96	26.15	2.03	-0.18	Rejected
Farmers 14.30	2.86	0.31					

In table 9, figures available shows that the mean values for herdsmen and farmers are 2.77 and 2.86 respectively. The standard deviations are 0.30 and 0.31 respectively. The standard error is 0.96, degree of freedom is 26.15 while the t-calculated and the t-critical are 2.03 and 1.2.86 respectively. The figures show that the t-calculated is significantly higher than the t-critical. Based on the established rule, hypothesis 3 is rejected and the alternative accepted.

V. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Findings in the study reveal that clashes between herders and farmers is not a myth but a reality which manifest in Ethiopie East L.G.A. of Delta State. It also reveals that issues on cattle rustling remains strange in Ethiopie East but that perceived attack on cows are linked to the clashes. It further reveals that perceived restriction of herdsmen of grazing by farmers is mere speculation as clashes are not linked to that but rather linked to damages of farms/farm crops and hacking and shooting of farmers to death in cold blood. It was also revealed that the clashes between the two groups are as a result of protection of interest and perceived forceful intimidation without respect to individual rights. These findings align with the position of Morrison (2018) who emphasized that when individual and ethnic interest beclouds national interest and values, conflict is inevitable.

Further findings in the study revealed that nearly all the herdsmen that practice open grazing in Ethiopie East L.G.A are illiterates with little or no knowledge of English Language. On the other hand, majority of the farmers have no formal education experience but can speak English Language for communication. Further findings reveal that communication gap created by illiteracy compounds the clashes between herdsmen and farmers. Other findings also reveal that education of herders and farmers can enhance communication which can lead to meaningful negotiations, understanding of the values and plight of others, tolerance and

respect for other peoples’ value systems. These can usher in peaceful coexistence and harmonious relationship. These findings corroborate with the findings of Olateju (2010) who posited that illiteracy is a catalyst to national crisis which can only be addressed through the provision of basic education to the citizens.

Findings reveal further that both herders and farmers agree that education of both groups will help foster tolerance of each group’s trade and differences, promote mutual understanding, enhance expression of ideas, foster peaceful coexistence, groups and interpersonal relationships. However, it was also revealed that while education can promote peace, it cannot force people to value the opinion of others and tolerate the excesses of others particularly when it is oppressive. This finding agrees with the earlier findings of Kayode (2018) believed that conflict has structural attachment that bothers on economic activities, struggles and quest for dominance due to poverty and illiteracy.

VI. CONCLUSION

Conflict is indispensable in human societies. This is predicted by the uneven endowment of natural resources by nature and limited access to the available economic resources. This is made worse by ignorance of the people of the divine tendency for interdependency of people to make life meaningful. The perceived ignorance has fueled so much crises that have taken away several lives and millions of properties. One of such is herdsmen farmers clashes in Nigeria and Ethiopie East in particular. Conflict is like wild fire that can destroy a whole nation if not given adequate attention. Part of the attention that can heal the wounds therein and redirect the interest of all from individualistic tendencies to collective survival is through education. If conflict must be handled in a nonviolent manner; and in a way that it will bring about positive changes, the education of the people remains paramount. There is no better time than now as the increase in the number of out of school children predicts greater disaster for the country through conflict.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Delta State government should as a matter of urgency set up a herdsmen/farmers’ conflict management agency and empower it to serve with all diligence, transparency and sincerity. This will help to curb the excesses of either group and minimize conflict between the two groups.
2. Delta State Government should regularly organize peace and conflict resolution seminars and workshops for farmers and herdsmen, not only in Ethiopie East but across the nation. This will serve as a form of education and thus enhance mutual understanding, respect for other people’s values and peaceful coexistence.

3. Government should not play double standard on conflicts generally and herders farmers conflicts in particular. When issues are addressed without respect to personalities, conflicts can be easily resolved and peace restored.

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