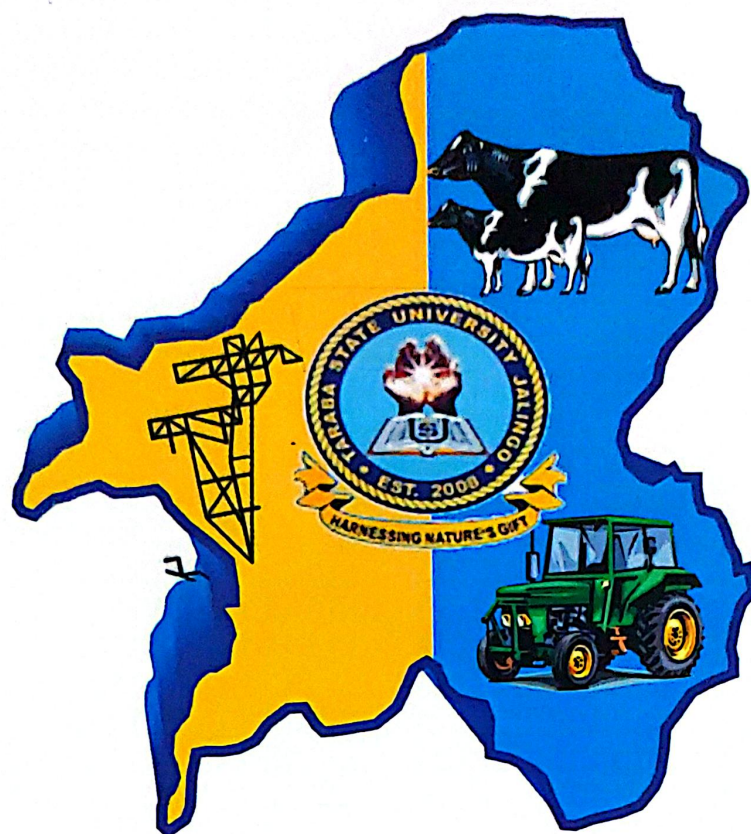


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TABLE OF CONTENT

FACTORS DETERMINING SUCCESS OF SMALL SCALE FISH FARMING ENTERPRISE IN WARRI METROPOLIS	1 -8
<i>Idoge, D. E., Gbigbi, T.M and Aguegbe, T. O</i>	
STRUCTURE AND MARKETING EFFICIENCY OF CASHEW NUT MARKET IN UMUAHIA NORTH AND SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF ABIA STATE NIGERI	9-16
<i>Offor E. I., Ahamefula, B. A. and Kurumeh, J.C.</i>	
PROFIT EFFICIENCY OF FISH FARMERS IN KWARA STATE NIGERIA	17-25
<i>Ogaji A., Oseghale A.I., Olarewaju T.O. and Oyeyemi E.D.</i>	
ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF FUFU PRODUCTION AMONG CASSAVA FARMERS IN UMUAHIA SOUTH L.G.A, ABIA STATE, NIGERIA.	26-32
<i>Ahamefule, B.A. and Ogbonna, C.U.</i>	
ANALYSIS OF INTRA-GROUP CONFLICTS IN CROP-BASED FARMERS' ASSOCIATIONS IN ILORIN EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KWARA STATE, NIGERIA	33- 40
<i>Laaro, K.A., *Omotesho, K. F., Akinrinde, A.F., and Yusuf A.</i>	
EVALUATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN DELTA SOUTH AGRICULTURAL ZONE: A CASE STUDY OF THE EXTENSION SUB-UNIT OF THE PROGRAMME'	41- 48
<i>Okwuokenye, G.F. and O.J. Ovharhe</i>	
SOCIOECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF RAIN-FED RICE PRODUCTION AMONG FEMALE SMALL-HOLDER FARMERS IN IVO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA.	49 - 54
<i>Kaine, A.I.N and Ume, S. I</i>	
TECHNICAL EFFICIENCY OF PALM OIL PRODUCTION IN NKANU EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ENUGU STATE, NGERIA.	55- 64
<i>Okelola, O.E, Olowoyo, B.F, Korie, B.N and Ariyo, O.C.</i>	
MARKETING MARGIN ANALYSIS OF PADDY RICE MARKETERS IN ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA	65-72
<i>Dauna, Y; Umar, A. J and Akintunde, M. O</i>	
USE OF <i>HYPTIS SUAVEOLENS</i> POWDER IN CONTROLLING ROOT-KNOT NEMATODE (<i>Meloidogyne javanica</i>) ON EGGPLANT	73 - 76
<i>Aji, M. B. , Mamman, A. , Jakada, M.B. and Adamu, M.Y</i>	
EFFECTS OF SALINITY ON GERMINATION AND GROWTH OF <i>Sphenostylis stenocarpa</i> (Hochst. Ex. A. Rich.) Harms (AFRICAN YAM BEAN)	77-87
<i>Nwajiobi, B. and G. C. Mgbeze</i>	
SOIL CHEMICAL QUALITY AND TOMATO PERFORMANCE AS INFLUENCE BY MORINGA (<i>Moringa oleifera</i>) EXTRACTS AT MINNA NIGERIA.	88-95
<i>Afolabi, S.G., Oriabure, O. M. ,Akingbola, O.O. and Saidu, A.</i>	
PROSPECT OF CATTLE RANCHING SYSTEM AS A CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGY TO FARMER – HERDSMEN CLASHES IN AFRICA: IMPLICATION ON RURAL EDUCATION	96--102
<i>Mahmood, H. Umar and Azuaga C.I.</i>	
AUTHOR'S GUIDE	103

ANALYSIS OF INTRA-GROUP CONFLICTS IN CROP-BASED FARMERS' ASSOCIATIONS IN ILORIN EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Incessant conflicts are major factors limiting the achievements and success of many farmers' associations in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to describe the characteristic features of farmers' groups; identify the causes of conflicts among members; examine the conflict resolution strategies in use; and identify the constraints faced in conflict resolution. A total of 110 farmers were selected through a simple random sampling procedure across the 22 registered crop-based farmers' associations in the study area. Data were collected using structured interview schedule and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study revealed that distrust in management and differences in attitude and values of group members were the major causes of conflict in farmers' groups. Open discussion at general meetings and resolution of conflict by a committee set up for the purpose were the major strategies adopted for conflict resolution among farmer groups. Inappropriate means of conflict resolution and lack of trust in the conflict resolution party or process were the major constraints to conflict resolution among farmers' groups. Group size ($r=0.275$, $p<0.01$) and mode of leadership emergence ($r=0.276$, $p<0.01$) had significant relationship with conflict resolution strategies in use. The study recommends the use of open discussion at general meetings, particularly among small groups while the use of closed meetings should be discouraged. The leadership of farmers' group should engage in transparent management of group affairs to prevent distrust and consequently nip conflicts in the bud. Also, extension agents should encourage farmers to form groups on the basis of shared values, attitude and perception to prevent conflict of interest.

Keywords: Conflict, Constraints, Farmers' Groups, Resolution Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Poverty has been on a steady rise in Nigeria particularly in rural communities (*United Nations Development Programme UNDP, 2008*). About 112 million Nigerians (representing 67.1 percent) of the country's total population of 167 million live below the poverty line (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Several Nigerians live on less than \$1 a day (Kanayo, 2014). Nigeria, like many other sub-Saharan African countries, has an agricultural sector that is highly characterised by a decline in farm sizes, reduced agricultural productivity, and a high degree of small-scale farming (Jirstrom, Andersson and Djurfeldt, 2011). Small-scale farming as the primary source of earning in rural communities has not assured sufficient livelihood (Babatunde, 2013). There

is, therefore, a shift in the concept of farming from being an individual, small-scale and traditional activity to a business. Various studies (Nguyet 2002; Barham and Chitemi 2009; Liverpool-Tasie, 2012) have emphasised the need to encourage formation and functionality of groups, or cooperative societies among farmers for the intent of pulling resources together, sharing risks, ideas/innovations, and ultimately enhancing productivity. Farmer-groups are considered as socio-economic groups because they are formed to accomplish some common social and economic goals in relation to farming activities (Ofuoku and Chukwuji, 2012). Farmers join such groups so that they can use their membership in the group to accomplish social and economic goals which they could not

individually achieve (Omotesho et al., 2016). Farmers' voice cannot be heard by government and funding agencies without farmers' groups. However, to engage in any meaningful dialogue with the rest of the society, farmers need their representative organisations. Unfortunately, many farmers groups in Nigeria are in a deplorable state characterised by corruption, conflict, indiscrimination and mistrust of management. They have not sufficiently met the expectations with which they were established. It is pertinent to note that as long as farmer-groups are made of various individuals, and they continue to operate as teams to achieve the groups' aims and objectives, conflict cannot be avoided since it is an inevitable aspect of life and teamwork.

Conflict is an integral part of human life, and it is an outcome of behaviours. Whenever and wherever there is interaction, there is potential conflict. Greed, covetousness, self-centeredness, discontent, envy, arrogance, rudeness, impunity, among other acts, are capable of producing a breakdown of human relations and interactions. Conflict means expression of hostility, negative attitudes, antagonism, aggression, rivalry, and misunderstanding. Conflict characterises the dynamics of human interaction, and this can be seen as a global phenomenon which occurs between individuals, groups and nations (Ayinde, Olayinka and Oladeji 2015). It is important to know that the situation of conflict poses major threat to farmers' groups and hence cooperation among the members of associations is very important as it determines the level of success in the groups' activities. Alabi (2010) opined that there is nothing wrong with conflict, it is a permanent feature of life, what is often questioned is how man responds to or manages it. Conflict could be destructive or constructive. Conflict can also take on any of several different forms, and this includes interpersonal, intrapersonal, intergroup, intra-group and inter-organisational conflicts. Conflict that occurs within groups or teams is called intragroup conflict. Intragroup conflict occurs when group members see disagreements, divergences and mismatched thoughts or ideas amongst themselves. Intragroup conflict is distinct as it develops from

implicit or real mismatches among group members. Earlier empirical studies on intragroup conflicts have mostly stressed on conflicts rising from either task or relationship issues. Researchers have also submitted that groups which are culturally diverse face more conflict than the groups having cultural similarity just because of preference, bias against members, mistakes in communication, different perceptions and acknowledgements among the members of group. Due to group members cultural differences, beliefs and values as well as different approaches to perceptions of conflict, it can be difficult to resolve conflict and also affect the ability of resolution.

Most farmers' associations in Nigeria are formed without regards for socio-cultural differences of members which often reduces the level of understanding among members as is evidenced by the composition of membership. Inadequate conflict resolution skills and strategies of executive members of many of the association have not assisted the situation. The incessant occurrences of conflicts which are usually not totally resolved is a limiting factor to the achievements and success of many farmers' associations in the country. Cooperation among members of the associations is essential as it determines the level of success in the associations' activities. Efficient strategies and timely resolution of conflicts within farmer-associations will help to strengthen the associations and foster unity and cohesion among members. It is therefore important to analyse the intragroup disputes among farmer-groups in order to understand the group dynamics, the causes of conflict, as well as the best conflict resolution strategies.

It is against this background that the study sought to analyse intra-group conflicts among crop-based farmer-groups in Ilorin East Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study were to;

- i. describe the characteristic features of the farmer-groups;
- ii. identify the causes of conflicts among members of farmer-groups;
- iii. examine the conflict resolution strategies in use;

- iv. determine the preferred conflict resolution strategies; and
- v. identify the constraints faced in conflict resolution among farmer-groups in the study area.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

The hypothesis of this study was stated in the null form as follows: H0₁: There is no significant relationship between group characteristics of farmer-group and the preferred conflict resolution strategies.

METHODOLOGY

The Study Area

The study was carried out in Ilorin East Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. The Local Government is one of the sixteen Local Government Areas of the State. It shares boundaries with Ilorin South, Ilorin West, Moro and Ifelodun Local Government Areas. The local government lies between latitudes 7°45'N and 9°30'N and longitudes 2°30'E and 6°25'E. Its' headquarters is at Oke-Oyi. It has a land area of 490,000 square kilometres and an estimated population of 204, 310 based on projections from the 2006 national population census. (National Population Commission, 2006). The major occupations of the people are farming, cattle rearing, weaving and butchery. Others include hunting, leatherwork, poultry enterprise, pottery, mat making and blacksmithing. The major crops grown in the area are Cassava, Maize, Guinea corn, Groundnut, Cowpea, Okro and leafy vegetables.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The population for the study consisted of all farmers who were members of registered farmer-groups in Ilorin East Local Government Area of Kwara State. The list of members of farmer-groups obtained from the Kwara State Agricultural Development Programme (KWADP) was the sampling frame for the study. A two-stage random sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents for the survey. The first stage involved the random selection of 50% of the 22 registered crop-based farmers' associations in the study area. The second stage involved the random selection of 25% of the members in each of the selected groups to arrive at a sample size of 110.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was done with the aid of a structured interview schedule. The interview schedule was used to elicit information on the characteristic features of the farmer-groups. It was also used to get responses on the causes of conflicts among members of farmers groups, conflict resolution strategies used by the farmer-groups, most preferred conflict resolution strategies by members and the level of severity of the various constraints faced in conflict resolution in farmer-groups. Descriptive statistics involving the use of frequency counts, percentages, mean scores and standard deviation was used to present the findings from the objectives of the study. The Likert-type scale was used to determine the main causes of conflict as well as constraints faced in conflict resolution among farmer-groups. The hypothesis of the study was tested using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that 45.5% of the groups had membership strength (group size) of ≤ 15 members. While 36.4% of the groups had between 16 and 25 members, only 9.1% had group size between 26 and 35 members. The mean group size of farmer-groups in the study area was 19.8. This implies that the size of farmer-groups in the study area were not too large. According to apriori expectations, larger groups increase the possibility of conflict due to the variety of viewpoints. Shen et al. (2014) also reported similar findings. The result also reveals that the average number of extension contact to the farmer-groups in the immediate past six months was 5.4 on an average of once in a month and this in line with the findings of Ofuokwe et al. (2008) who reported that most farmers had contact with extension agents once, monthly. The frequency of meeting of most (63.6%) of the farmer-groups was monthly while few (36.4%) had meetings on a weekly basis. The frequency of meeting might help members get adequate information as well as update their knowledge on regular basis (Lukuyuet al., 2012). The mode of emergence of leaders for majority (90.1%) of the farmers' groups was by election while only a few (9.1%) use selection method for leaders' emergence. This implies that democratic electioneering procedures are being used in most farmer-groups for the emergence of their leaders.

Table 1: Characteristic features of farmer-groups

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Group size			
≤15	50	45.5	
16-25	40	36.4	19.8
26-35	10	9.1	
≥36	10	9.1	
Group Extension contact			
1-3	38	34.5	
4-7	39	35.5	5.4
8-11	30	27.3	
≥12	3	2.7	
Frequency of meeting			
Weekly	40	36.4	
Monthly	70	63.6	
Leaders mode of emergence			
Selection	10	9.1	
Election	100	90.9	
Association membership			
Open	80	72.7	
Closed	30	27.3	
Association limited by size			
Yes	70	63.6	
No	40	36.4	

Field Survey, 2017, NC (Not a cause), NS (Not severe), MS (Mildly severe), S (Severe), VS (Very severe) M (Mean) R (Rank)

The result on Table 2 shows that the major cause of conflict among farmer-groups was distrust of management (M=2.30). This could be as a result of insincerity on the part of the management of the groups. The difference in attitude, values and perceptions (M=2.25) and abuse of authority (M=2.21) were ranked 2nd and 3rd respectively as causes of conflict in farmers group. This implies that the differences in the views, attitudes, and general personality of the farmers lead to clash of interests among the farmers resulting in disagreement in the farmer-groups. This corroborates with Omisore and Abiodun (2014). Darius (2003) and Kamilu *et al.*(2012) also reported that groups which are

culturally diverse also face more negative outcomes of groups than the groups having cultural similarity just because of preference, bias against members, mistakes in communication, different perceptions, acknowledgements among the members of the groups. Other causes of conflicts in order of severity include; lack of tolerance and openness (M=2.12), weak or inadequate organisation structures (M=2.10), lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities (M=2.09), segregation and favouritism (M=2.05). The least cause of conflict as indicated in the result was scarcity of resources (M=1.80).

Table 2: Causes of conflict among members of farmer-groups

Cause	N.C F (%)	N.S F (%)	M.S F (%)	S F (%)	V.S F (%)	M	R
Scarcity of resources	52(47.3)	31(28.2)	24(21.8)	3(2.7)	0(0)	1.80	1 st
Difference in attitude, values and perceptions	24(21.8)	51(46.4)	19(17.3)	16(14.5)	0(0)	2.25	2 nd
Poor communication	49(44.5)	29(26.4)	17(15.5)	15(13.6)	0(0)	1.98	3 rd
Disagreement about goals, needs, priorities and interest	40(36.4)	45(40.9)	21(19.1)	4(3.6)	0(0)	1.90	4 th
Lack of team work	40(36.4)	36(32.7)	25(22.7)	9(8.2)	0(0)	2.03	5 th
Poor or inadequate organization structures	24(21.8)	54(49.1)	29(26.4)	3(2.7)	0(0)	2.10	6 th
Lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities.	35(31.8)	43(39.1)	19(17.3)	13(11.8)	0(0)	2.09	7 th
Abuse of authority	22(20)	51(46.4)	29(26.4)	8(7.3)	0(0)	2.21	8 th
Lack of tolerance and openness	28(25.5)	48(43.6)	28(25.5)	5(4.5)	1(0.9)	2.12	9 th
Distrust of Leadership	23(20.9)	45(40.9)	28(25.5)	14(12.7)	0(0)	2.30	10 th
Segregation and favouritism	34(30.9)	42(38.2)	28(25.5)	6(5.5)	0(0)	2.05	11 th
Land disputes	50(45.5)	33(30)	17(15.5)	6(5.5)	4(3.6)	1.92	12 th

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Result in Table 3 shows the strategies used in conflict resolution. Result reveals that

the strategy that is most used for conflict resolution in farmers group was open discussion

at general meetings with a mean implies that conflicts were better there was open discussion at general it allows participants to air their their grievances known and prejudice among the group (2008).Resolution by setting (M=1.95) and Closed meeting involved with leaders of t

Table 3: Strategies used in conflict resolution

Conflict Resolution Strategies*
Open discussion at general meetings
Closed meetings of parties involved
Resolution by set up committee
Arbitration before community leaders
Resolution by involvement of law enforcement
Seeking legal redress in courts

Source: Field Survey, 2017 *Multiple Responses

Result in Table 4 shows percent of the respondents discussion at general meeting a conflict resolution. While 37.3 respondents preferred resolution committees, 5.5 percent arbitration before community resolution by involvement of law agencies to resolve conflicts. On the respondents preferred seeking in court while the least preferred close meetings of parties involved of the association(2.7%). It

Table 4: Preferred strategies for conflict resolution

Conflict Resolution Strategies
Open discussion at general meetings.
Closed meetings of parties involved with leaders
Resolution by set up committee
Arbitration before community leaders
Resolution by the involvement of law enforcement
Seeking legal redress in courts

Source: Field Survey, 2017
N.C= Not a constraint, N.S= Not severe, S= Severe

Result in Table 5 shows severity of constraints to conflict resolution. Result reveals that the most severe conflict resolution was inappropriate conflict resolution (M=2.45). by lack of trust in the conflict resolution process (M=2.43) and lack among member (M=2.37). Order of severity include F

at general meetings with a mean of 1.96. This implies that conflicts were better resolved when there was open discussion at general meetings as it allows participants to air their view and make their grievances known and also prevents prejudice among the group (Wachs, 2008). Resolution by setting up committees (M=1.95) and Closed meetings of parties involved with leaders of the association

(M=1.86) were rated 2nd and 3rd respectively as the strategies used for conflict resolution in farmers group. Other strategies used in order of preference include Seeking legal redress in courts (M=1.33) and Resolution by the involvement of law enforcement agencies (M=1.32). However, the least used strategy in conflict resolution was Arbitration before community leaders (M=1.16).

Table 3: Strategies used in conflict resolution

Conflict Resolution Strategies*	F	%	Mean	S.D	Rank
Open discussion at general meetings	106	96.4	1.96	0.19	1st
Closed meetings of parties' involved with leaders of the associations	95	86.4	1.86	0.35	3rd
Resolution by set up committee	105	95.5	1.95	0.21	2nd
Arbitration before community leaders	18	16.4	1.16	0.37	6th
Resolution by involvement of law enforcement agencies	35	31.8	1.32	0.468	5th
Seeking legal redress in courts	37	33.6	1.33	0.475	4th

Source: Field Survey, 2017 *Multiple Responses

Result in Table 4 shows that 42.7 percent of the respondents preferred open discussion at general meeting as a strategy for conflict resolution. While 37.3 percent of the respondents preferred resolution by setting up committees, 5.5 percent each preferred arbitration before community leaders and resolution by involvement of law enforcement agencies to resolve conflicts. Only 6.4 percent of the respondents preferred seeking legal redress in court while the least preferred means was close meetings of parties involves with leaders of the association(2.7%). It is important to

compare this result to the result in Table 3 in which closed meetings of parties involves with leaders of the association ranked as the 3rd most used method with a high mean score. This implies that although only 2.7% of the respondents preferred the use of closed meetings, it is still popularly used in many of the groups. Omisore and Abiodun(2014), also opined that conflict resolution in general meetings allows parties involved to openly talk about issues and disagreements, allowing them to share information and confront a conflict together.

Table 4: Preferred strategies for conflict resolution

Conflict Resolution Strategies	Frequency	%
Open discussion at general meetings.	47	42.7
Closed meetings of parties involved with leaders of the associations.	3	2.7
Resolution by set up committee	41	37.3
Arbitration before community leaders	6	5.5
Resolution by the involvement of law enforcement agencies	6	5.5
Seeking legal redress in courts	7	6.4

Source: Field Survey, 2017

N.C= Not a constraint, N.S= Not severe, M.S= Mildly severe, S= Severe, V.S= Very severe, M= Mean, R= Rank

Result in Table 5 shows the level of severity of constraints to conflict resolution. Result reveals that the most severe constraints to conflict resolution was inappropriate means of conflict resolution (M=2.45). This was followed by lack of trust in the conflict resolution party or process (M=2.43) and lack of cooperation among member (M=2.37). Other constraints in order of severity include Failure to accept

disciplinary actions (M=2.35), lack of clearly spelt out penalties for offences (M=2.35), the undue influence of power brokers or local leaders (M=2.30) and conflict of interest on the part of leaders (M=2.30). However, the least constraint to conflict resolution as indicated by the result was difference in religious belief (M=2.02).

Table 5: Constraints to conflict resolution

Challenges	N.C F(%)	N.S F(%)	M.S F(%)	S F(%)	V.S F(%)	M	R
Lack of cooperation among member	29(26.4)	32(29.1)	28(25.5)	21(19.1)	0(0)	2.37	3rd
Conflict of interest on the part of leaders	16(14.5)	64(58.2)	11(10)	19(17.3)	0(0)	2.30	5th
Failure to accept disciplinary actions	11(10)	61(55.5)	26(23.6)	12(10.9)	0(0)	2.35	4th
Lack of trust in the conflict resolution party or process	7(6.4)	61(55.5)	30(27.3)	12(10.9)	0(0)	2.43	2nd
Inappropriate means of conflict resolution	21(19.1)	34(30.9)	40(36.4)	15(13.6)	0(0)	2.45	1st
Difference in religious belief	39(35.5)	36(32.7)	29(26.4)	6(5.5)	0(0)	2.02	6th
Lack of clearly spelt out penalties for offences	16(14.5)	58(52.7)	23(20.9)	8(7.3)	5(4.5)	2.35	4th
Undue influence of power brokers or local leaders	22(20)	42(38.2)	37(33.6)	9(8.2)	0(0)	2.30	5th

Source: Field Survey, 2017

TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between the characteristic features of farmers group and members preferred conflict resolution strategies.

The result of correlation analysis shows that group size ($r=-0.275$, $p<0.01$) and mode of leadership emergence ($r=0.276$, $p<0.01$) had a significant relationship with the preferred conflict resolution strategies. However, membership composition ($r=-0.172$, $p>0.05$), frequency of meeting ($r=-0.055$, $p>0.05$), distance to meeting ($r=0.010$, $p>0.05$), age of the group ($r=0.105$, $p>0.05$) and mode of group

formation ($r=-0.077$, $p>0.05$) had no significant relationship with conflict resolution strategy preference. This result implies that the number of members in the groups could be a factor in the members' choice of conflict resolution strategies. Members of smaller sized groups are more likely to prefer open discussion at group meetings due to the manageable size. Open discussion at meetings may be cumbersome and somewhat rowdy due to the large size and desire of every member for their views to be heard. Also, groups in which leaders are democratically elected were more favourably disposed to open discussion at group meetings.

Table 6: Correlation analysis showing relationship between group characteristics and conflict resolution strategies preference

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision
Membership composition	-0.172	0.073	Not Significant
Frequency of meeting	0.055	0.568	Not Significant
Distance to meeting	0.010	0.919	Not significant
Group size	-0.275***	0.004	Significant
Mode of leadership emergence	0.276***	0.003	Significant
Age of the group	0.105	0.277	Not Significant
Mode of formation	-0.077	0.423	Not Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2017, ***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that the major cause of conflicts in farmers' groups in the study area was distrust of leadership. It was also found that open discussion at general meetings was the most preferred strategy among members of farmer-groups in the study area. Closed meetings were popularly used among the groups spite of the fact that very few of the respondents had preference for it. Group size

and mode of leadership emergence had significant relationship with the preferred conflict resolution strategies. The study recommends training of leaders of farmer-groups in conflict management as well as building membership trust. It also recommends the use of open discussion at general meetings, particularly among smaller groups. Finally, the use of closed meetings should be discouraged.

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