



ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTIVENESS OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AMONGST RURAL HOUSEHOLDS IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted with the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of conflict management strategies amongst rural households in Osun State, Nigeria. 153 household heads, selected through multistage sampling technique, were interviewed for the study through the administration of pre-tested interview schedule in the three purposively selected rural Local Government Areas (LGAs). The mean age of the respondents was 47 ± 17.8 and 62.1% of them were male. In addition, the mean household size was 6.3 ± 3.9 and majority (78.4%) were farmers. Causes of rural household conflicts identified were inadequate finance, wives' insubordination and interference from third party, amongst others. The findings revealed that at $p < 0.01$, occupation ($\chi^2 = 33.483$); sex ($\chi^2 = 29.502$); and religion affiliation ($\chi^2 = 31.612$) of the respondents had significant association with effectiveness of conflict management strategies. Furthermore, at $p < 0.01$, respondents' age ($r = 0.512$) and household size ($r = -0.483$) had significant relationship with conflict management strategies' effectiveness. The study concludes that conflict management strategies amongst rural households were effective. It was recommended that policy makers, rural developers and extension agents should include effective conflict management strategies in programme packages.

Key words: Household conflict, conflict management strategies, effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Conflicts are found at every stage of life. Individuals, groups, associations, clubs, societies, local, national and even world community continue to experience conflicts and crises in one way or the other. Conflicts are features of life and they have been since the beginning of creation- between and among the first set of human beings created on earth (Rambaud, 2006; Alabi, 2010).

Conflict is inevitable and no relationship is immuned; Longman Dictionary (2016), defines conflict as a state of opposition between persons or ideas or interests. In the household, it could be between husband and wife, father and children, mother and children, among wives, among children to mention but a few; this may be initiated from within the household unit or from external sources.

Alabi (2010) is of the opinion that there is actually nothing wrong with conflict, it is a permanent feature of life; what is often questioned is how man responds to or manages it. Conflict management is referred to as how man has come to live with, cope with and resolve from time to time; that is, controlling it before or during and after it has occurred. When managed well, it could serve as a catalyst for change and opportunity for relational growth, while a poorly handled conflict could become violent or destructive which could hinder peaceful coexistence in the household (Francis, 2007; Helen, 2011). Conflict management in rural areas is quite different from that in the urban areas due to the difference in their level of education, traditional beliefs, level of living, and experience among others (Nikals and Mikael, 2005).

The socioeconomic stability of the household depends upon its emotional system which in-turn affects the whole community or

society (Nikals and Mikael, 2005; Onigu and Albert, 1999; Otomar and Paul, 2002). In developing countries, Nigeria alike, poverty and hunger found in rural families can be explained among other issues by endless conflicts. In order to be productive, the rural household needs an emotional health and the effective household economy may not be possible with conflicts among family members; All in all, the higher the household stability, the higher its level of socioeconomic development and thus the development of the whole society.

According to Ekong (2010), there is no specific formula for resolving conflict but there are general procedures or approaches which might be used either by themselves or in combination. There could be a temporary working agreement between the parties in conflict and this process is called accommodation, it involves reciprocal adjustment and temporary modification of attitudes by the rivalries group in order for them to co-operate. There are different forms of accommodation and this includes truce, displacement, institutionalized release of hostility, super ordination, compromise, third party roles in compromise, segregation and toleration.

Thus, effective management strategies that could help to nip conflict in the bud and to prevent it from escalating if it erupts, as well as to sustain peace to avert future occurrence of conflict and their attendant large scale effects should be developed and sustained by households that seeks peace, growth and development. This is the thrust of this study.

The main objective of the study is to assess the effectiveness of conflict management



strategies used among rural household in Osun state. The specific objectives are to

- i. describe the socioeconomic characteristics of rural household heads in Osun State;
- ii. identify sources of conflict in the rural households;
- iii. examine the effect of conflict on rural households welfare; and
- iv. determine the effectiveness of the conflict management strategies used by rural household heads.

Research Hypothesis

- i. There is no significant relationship between effectiveness of conflict management strategies used by rural household heads and their socioeconomic characteristics.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Osun State, one of the states in Southwestern Nigeria, the State consist of six administrative zones. Multistage sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. At first stage, three administrative zones, namely Iwo, Ife and Ilesa were randomly selected from the six administrative zones. At second stage, the most rural Local Government Area (LGA) was purposively selected from each of the selected administrative zones, namely, Ayedaade from Iwo zone, Ife-East from Ife zone and Atakumosa-West from Ilesa. The third stage involved selecting three villages randomly from each selected LGA; finally, proportionate sampling was used in selecting 153 respondents in all the selected villages, that is, Ayedaade LGA (12 from Akiriboto 1, 17 from Akiriboto 2 and 23 from Wakajaye), Atakumosa-West LGA (16 from Iwaro, 19 from Iloba and 15 from Onikoko), and Ife-East LGA (16 from Erefe, 22 from Iyanfoworogi and 13 from Akeredolu). In all, 153 rural household heads were interviewed for the study. Duly validated and pretested structural interview schedule were used to elicit quantitative data and key informant interview (KII) was used for gathering qualitative data from the respondents. Data were summarised with percentages, means and standard deviation, while Chi-square and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were employed to test the hypothesis.

Measurement of variables

Dependent variable: The dependent variable for this study was conceptualized as effectiveness of conflict management strategies used by household heads, using conflict management strategies adapted and modified from

Ekong (2010) which were peaceful reconciliation (identifying and correcting sources of conflicts), third party involvement, compromise, forcing, super-ordination, tolerance, segregation, and smoothing. The respondents were asked to react to each conflict management strategies used. The reaction was against a 4-point scale from Excellent (4 points), Good (3 points), Fair (2 point), and Poor (1 point) as used by Adeloye (2016). The total score per respondent was further classified into three levels of effectiveness as follows: low, moderate and high effectiveness using mean of total effectiveness score plus/minus standard deviation.

The effect of conflict on rural households' welfare was determined by asking the respondents to indicate how often does conflict result to these 8 indicators (separation of household members, divorce, lack of cooperation, disregarding authority, bloodshed, bitterness among household members, lack of peace and disruption of household activities) on a 4-point scale of: Very often (3), Often (2), Rarely (1), and Never (0). The total score per respondent was further classified into two levels of effect as follows: Unfavourable and favourable using the mean as cut off point, score above cut off was regarded as unfavourable since all the indicators were negative while the scores below the cut off was regarded as favourable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic characteristics of rural household heads in the study area

Results in Table 1 revealed that many (47.7%) of the respondents were at their old age, while the mean age of the respondents was 47.5 with standard deviation of 17.8. This implies that the respondents comprise people of active minds and bodies, which might be versatile in resolving household conflicts. Furthermore, it was revealed that majority (62.1%) and (75.2%) of interviewed household heads were males and practice Christianity, respectively. The table also showed that the households interviewed had a mean size of 6.3 with standard deviation of 3.9. Since only few (24.2%) were not literate; it then implies that majority could read and write. In addition, 92.2% of the respondents were Yorubas since the study area falls in Yoruba land. Majority (78.4%) of them were farmers by occupation while few engaged in petty trading and civil service. This finding was in consonance with earlier reports of Adisa (2001) that rural dwellers in Osun State engaged in more than one occupation as means of livelihood.



Table 1: Distribution of rural household heads by selected socioeconomic characteristics

Variables		Frequency	Percentages	
Age (years)	Below 40	53	43.6	Mean= 47.5 Standard dev.=17.8
	41-60	73	47.7	
	61-80	25	16.3	
	Above 80	2	1.3	
Sex	Male	95	62.1	
	Female	58	37.9	
*Occupation	Farming	120	78.4	
	Petty trading	74	48.4	
	Civil servant	45	29.4	
	Artisanship	41	26.8	
Religion affiliation	Christianity	115	75.2	
	Islam	35	24.8	
Ethnicity	Yoruba	141	92.2	
	Igbo	4	2.6	
	Others	8	5.3	
Household size	Below 6	65	43.8	Mean= 6.3 Standard deviation= 3.9
	6- 10	74	48.4	
	11-15	11	7.2	
	Above 15	1	0.7	
Level of educational attainment	Non-literate	37	24.2	
	Primary	32	20.9	
	Secondary	70	45.8	
	Post-secondary	14	9.1	

Source: Field survey, 2014

*Multiple responses

Causes of rural household conflict

Table 2 revealed that out of the causes of rural household conflict, inadequate finance (86.3%) ranked highest, followed by wives' insubordination (77.1%), communication gap (75.2%), and interference from third party (73.2%) in that order, while overburdening of a member

(47.2%) ranked least. This result implies that these (inadequate finance, wives insubordination, communication gap and interference from third party) were the major causes of household conflict in the study area.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by sources of rural household conflict

Sources of rural household conflicts*	Frequency	Percentages	Rank
Clash of interest	102	66.7	7 th
Inadequate finance	132	86.3	1 st
Difference in personalities	95	62.1	10 th
Lack of cooperation	110	71.9	5 th
Dispute over the use of authority	76	49.7	14 th
Mis-use of limited resources	98	64.1	9 th
Communication gap	115	75.2	3 rd
Overburdening of a member	72	47.1	16 th
Rivalry among wives	82	53.6	13 th
Competition among children	75	49.0	15 th
Interference from third party	112	73.2	4 th
Unfaithfulness/ infidelity	89	58.2	12 th
Delay in child bearing/ Lack of children	106	69.3	6 th
Not giving birth to particular sexed child	90	58.8	11 th
Negligence of duty	102	66.7	7 th
Wives' insubordination	118	77.1	2 nd

Source: Field survey, 2014

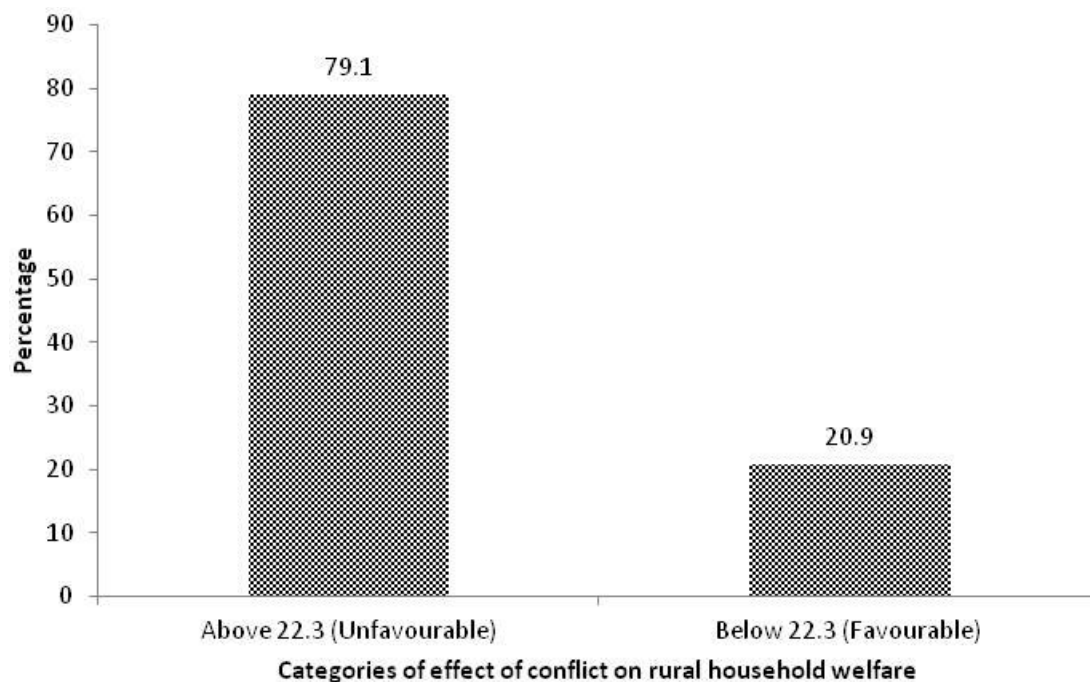
*Multiple responses



Categories of effect of conflict on rural household welfare

Results in Figure 1 show that 79.1 per cent of the respondents categorized the effect conflict had on rural household welfare as unfavourable, while only 20.9 per cent of the respondents categorized the effect of conflict on rural household welfare as favourable. It could therefore be inferred that the unfavourable effect of conflict on rural

household welfare could lead to impairment of rural household economy and stability, and that of the community as a whole. This finding corroborates that of Balthazar (2012) which concluded that there is an inverse relationship between family conflicts and rural economic welfare.



Mean= 22.3

Figure 1: Bar chart showing distribution of categories of effect of conflict on rural household welfare
Source: Field survey, 2014

The results in Table 3 revealed that peaceful reconciliation (1.85) ranked highest in the order of effectiveness among conflict management strategies used, followed by third party involvement (1.81), compromise (1.75), and tolerance (1.73) while forcing (1.65) was ranked lowest.

This finding implies that these (peaceful reconciliation, third party involvement, compromise and tolerance) were effective conflict management strategies recorded in the study area. This finding affirmed that of Alabi (2010) and Ekong (2010) which reported that third party involvement, compromise, tolerance were main conflict management common in Nigerian communities. This was supported by excerpts from the KII thus:

“...i always beg my husband in the midnight whenever conflict occurs between us...”

(KII excerpts with a woman in Iloba community)
“...i always report my wife to her mother and sometimes the pastor whenever conflict occurs...”

(KII excerpts with a man in Iyanfoworogi community)

“...i came to this village to escape conflict from my wife, I need time to think and attend to my farm...”

(KII excerpts with a man in Akeredolu community)
“...whenever conflict occurs in the house I wait for my wife to beg me, because I am the head of the family...”

(KII excerpts with a man in Akiriboto 1 community)

“...i cook my husband’s favorite meal and apologize to him whenever I offend him...”

(KII excerpts with a woman in Erefe community)
Source: Field survey, 2014

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by conflict management strategies' effectiveness
n=153

Conflict management strategies	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Mean	Rank
Third party involvement	95 (46.4)	34 (23.2)	14 (19.4)	10 (11.0)	1.81	2 nd
Compromise	67 (72.4)	52 (15.5)	30 (11.5)	4 (0.6)	1.75	3 rd
Forcing	32 (39.3)	34 (10.0)	65 (19.4)	22 (31.3)	1.65	8 th
Super-ordination	46 (58.3)	34 (16.1)	38 (23.2)	35 (2.4)	1.68	6 th
Tolerance	58 (50.0)	35 (13.3)	45 (19.4)	15 (17.3)	1.73	4 th
Segregation	35 (49.1)	45 (13.3)	28 (23.2)	45 (13.6)	1.67	7 th
Smoothing	48 (56.0)	67 (19.9)	26 (16.7)	12 (7.4)	1.70	5 th
Peaceful reconciliation	112 (59.5)	12 (16.7)	10 (13.3)	19 (10.5)	1.85	1 st

Grand mean = 1.76

Standard deviation = 0.15

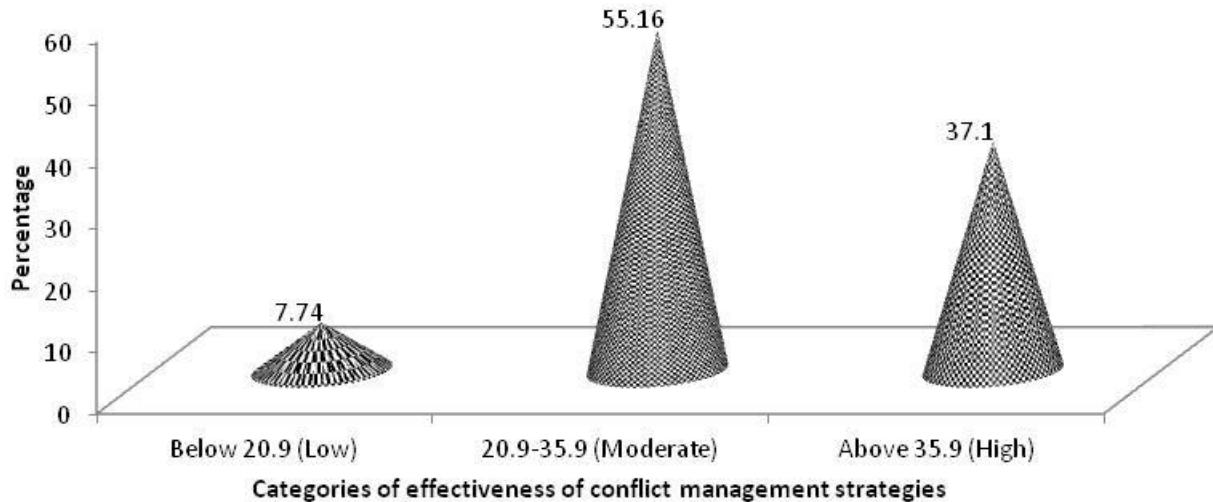
Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Field survey, 2014

Categories of conflict management strategies' effectiveness

Results in Figure 2 revealed that majority (92.26%) of the household heads indicated that conflict management strategies used were effective.

This finding corroborates that of Balthazar (2012) which stated that effectiveness conflict management strategies leads household cohesion and stability of it economy.



Mean= 28.4

Standard deviation= 7.5

Figure 2: Cone chart showing distribution of respondents by categories of effectiveness of conflict management strategies

Source: Field survey, 2014

Hypothesis testing

Result in Table 4 revealed that at 0.01 level of significance, occupation ($\chi^2=33.483$); sex ($\chi^2=29.502$); and religion affiliation ($\chi^2=31.612$) of the respondents had significant association with conflict management strategies' effectiveness. Furthermore, at 0.05 level of significance, the respondents' levels of educational attainment ($\chi^2=32.851$) also had significant association with the conflict management strategies' effectiveness.

Whereas ethnicity ($\chi^2 =4.370$) had no significant association with the conflict management strategies' effectiveness. Thus, ethnicity of the respondents has nothing to do with conflict management strategies' effectiveness.



Table 4: Results of Chi-Square analysis of the relationship between socio economic characteristics of respondents and conflict management strategies' effectiveness

Variables	χ^2 Value	DF	P-Value	Decision
Sex	29.502	2	0.001**	Significant
Occupation	33.483	4	0.001**	Significant
Religion affiliation	31.612	2	0.001**	Significant
Ethnicity	4.370	5	0.635	Not significant
Levels of education	32.851	5	0.003*	Significant

Source: Field survey, 2014

* Significant at 0.05 level of significant DF- Degree of Freedom

** Significant at 0.01 level of significant

Result in Table 5 revealed that at 0.01 level of significance, respondents' age ($r= 0.512$) and household size ($r= -0.483$) had significant relationship with conflict management strategies' effectiveness. While that of age was positive, that

of household size was negative. Thus, increase in respondents' age would increase conflict management strategies' effectiveness and increase in respondents' household size would decrease conflict management strategies' effectiveness.

Table 5: Correlation analysis showing relationship between socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents and conflict management strategies' effectiveness

Variables	Correlation coefficient (r)	Coefficient of determination (r^2)	Decision
Age	0.521	0.271**	Significant
Household size	-0.483	0.233**	Significant

Source: Field survey, 2014

**Significant at the 0.01 level

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that inadequate finance, wives' insubordination, communication gap and interference from third party ranked high on the list of causes of rural household conflicts. Also, identifying and correcting sources of conflicts, third party involvement, compromise, and tolerance ranked high among the list of conflict management strategies in terms of effectiveness. It was recommended that rural developers cum extension agents should include effective conflict management strategies in their programme package.

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